

2009 Eckhart Tolle TV Questions And Answers

[Speaker 1] (0:25 - 1:02:29)

We need to understand a few basic things about this, and I'd like to remind you of something that's already been written in the power of now, and that is that your life consists of, what you call your life, is usually your life situation. Your life consists of your life situation, which is your job, your financial situation, your relationships, your living situation, your health situation, whether you're young or old, or whatever is happening in your life, all that makes up your life situation. And for most people, that's all there is.

They don't know anything else. Their whole life consists, what they call my life, when they refer to my life, they're talking about their life situation. And in the power of now, I differentiate between your life situation, which is one level, and a more fundamental level that I call your life.

We are going to talk about these two levels today at a time when, for many people, their life situation is becoming challenging. They're encountering new limitations suddenly coming into their life situation. The only difference between our present situation in the world and what normally happens is that many people experience similar things at the same time.

So many people at the present time experience some form of challenge or limitation coming into their life, as many of the structures, the external structures in the world, are becoming shaky, and some have collapsed already. You may remember from a New Earth, I speak about the collapse of Soviet communism, which nobody could have predicted. And I speak of the impending collapse of many of the structures that are ego-based, that are an external reflection of an inner state of consciousness, that is the ego.

And those structures, which, of course, includes financial structures and so on, are now beginning to collapse. And something totally new will arise. How long this collapse will take, I cannot say.

But everybody can clearly see, and even the experts are talking about systemic, I hear this word on the radio, a systemic crisis or something like that. In other words, the crisis is not to do with this or that on the surface of things, but concerns the very structure of these organizations, in the same sense that the human mind, the problems of the human mind have not to do with content of whatever is the content of your mind, but the very structure of the mind, the human mind that needs to change. So for many people, limitation in one form or another is coming into their life situation.

And that is actually not what the media wants us to believe. These things are dreadful. The challenge that many people are encountering at this time is actually that which will push them into a new state of consciousness.

That is the possibility, that is the promise. Whenever you encounter a crisis situation, whether it's personal or collective, there is the opening into a new way of being. The possibility, it doesn't mean that everybody will embrace that possibility.

So we need to first of all see, not believe what we are told in the media, that we should be in a state of fear, that the only real response, the only natural response to what's happening is a state of fear. That is an unconscious response. We need to see that change is absolutely necessary in this world, and the dissolution of many of the ego-based structures is absolutely necessary for the planet to survive and for humanity to survive.

So what's happening is not dreadfully bad. What's happening needs to happen. The totality, the intelligence behind phenomena is doing it.

So it is a good thing, and if challenges come into your life, which might mean limitation, financial limitation, you may have to move somewhere else, you may have to downgrade, uncertainty may come into your life. Oh, that shouldn't be happening. I should know what's going to happen for the next 20, 30 years of my life.

Well, you don't know anymore. And that is wonderful that there is suddenly an opening into uncertainty. So is it possible for you to embrace uncertainty and not demand that you should know what's going to happen to you in your life situation?

To embrace not knowing, to embrace uncertainty and to embrace, yes, yes, there are difficulties, there are challenging situations, but that is part of being here on this planet in this form. I'd like to remind you of, there's a book called *The Road Less Traveled*, and I never got to read the whole book. I basically got stuck on the first two sentences of the book, and those first two sentences of the book were so good that you didn't need to read anymore.

I don't know whether that's a good thing for an author to write such a good book, that all you need is the first two sentences. And if you don't get that, you can still read the rest of the book, but if you get that, well. So the first sentence is, life is difficult, okay?

And the second sentence, I don't know literally, but it says something like, and if you know that life is difficult and you accept that life is difficult, it's no longer difficult. It's only, it's difficult when, if you say it shouldn't be. But if you go with, yes, the uncertainty, this is part of being here in this form, there is continuous uncertainty, and the certainty, the rigidity of things is an illusion.

The certainty that all these structures are solid, and you can sometimes see it, that the world trade center looked very solid, and phew, gone. And all the structures, the big banks, they looked so solid, nothing could possibly happen there, they are forever, and within a few weeks, they're beginning to crumble. It's Soviet communism, nothing looked

more solid than Soviet communism.

You say, this is so rigid, it can't possibly, must at least survive for another thousand years, the rigidity of it, and the people who embodied that, it's not going to move. When you saw the Soviet rulers greeting the military parades, huge tanks and rockets going past, nothing can be more solid than that, and within a year, collapsed, the whole thing collapsed. Now, one good thing, of course, about traveling to India is that the external reality is a little bit less solid than in the West, so you're less likely to delude yourself that you live in a solid reality that can be controlled or that you can be in control of, where you see the structures are actually a bit shaky everywhere, and even if you go into a luxury hotel, you never know what's going to happen. So, we are learning to go with the flow of things, as the expression goes, and the flow of things is fluid, it's not a continuous change, something new is arising, and why demand that there should be certainty in your life? Be open to uncertainty and see how empowering that actually is, and not say, okay, but what about my pension plan, the mutual funds?

I had saved all my life, and now, look, I got the statements, I lost 50% of it. Yes, so, but you're still here, that's your life situation. Whatever happens, your life situation, and you may remember a year ago, you were looking at your mutual funds, and said, wow, it's made so much money, it's great.

It feels good, and then you look at it again. Oh, okay, now I can relax now. And then you relax, and then the next one comes, and it's, oh my God, life is difficult.

Things are dissolving, and see, if you resist internally what is happening, as the media teaches you to do, then, of course, you resist the flow, you resist the arising of the new, the arising of the new state of consciousness, primarily, in you, and eventually, the arising of new external expressions of that state of consciousness, a new world. We don't need to be concerned about that. That comes of itself.

What we need to be concerned about is to be open to this transformation, to be open to not knowing. So there's our life situation, and it's interesting. There may be interesting changes happening in our life situation, and we say, that's fine.

Whatever change comes, you look at the situation and see, yes, all of a sudden, a limitation is coming into my life. I lost my job, and my investments are not worth that much anymore. Okay, then, how can you overcome these limitations?

Limitations can be overcome always on two levels. There is the external limitations. Limitations can be overcome on an external level, and other limitations can only be overcome on an inner level.

So you need to see, whatever situation you encounter in your life, is there anything I can do to overcome these limitations? It might involve moving somewhere else where you

don't have a huge mortgage anymore. It might involve moving to a different location.

It might involve finding a different job or thinking outside of the box and doing something totally different you'd never even thought of, of thinking creatively. So whatever limitation you encounter in your life, you look at, first of all, at the externals of the situation. Is there anything I can do?

And then you become still. And then you start thinking again, and you look at the situation. What are the possibilities?

Then you become still again. Then you look again, you think, or you talk to someone. And then you go back into stillness, and that process may take a while, not necessarily just a day, of looking what it is, what is it that I can do, and going within where you're not looking for anything, but become comfortable with what is here and now.

And when you become comfortable with what is here and now, you're stepping out of your life situation into life. Life is now. Life has nothing to do with what's going on in your life.

It has nothing to do with past and future or what your relationships are or what your financial situation is or your living situation is or even your health situation is. That's all your life situation. That is not life.

Your life situation exists in time, past and future. Life is now. So it is vital that you learn to step out of your life situation so that, periodically, so that your life situation does not absorb your entire attention continuously, because if it does, it'll drain you and eat you up because you'll have continuous stuff to think about, one problem after another in my life, my life situation.

You know, do you think, oh, now I have to, what about that problem and that? And you're thinking about your, there's a continuous succession of problems that I need to worry about, and if I don't worry about it, it's all going to collapse totally, even worse than it has done so already. I need to be responsible and worry.

You're being eaten up by your life situation. Your mind, it comes down to your mind, because your mind gives power to your life situation. The continuous involuntary mind activity really is your life situation.

If you don't think about your life situation, there is no life situation. What situation? You come into, you step out of that periodically, vital to learn that, and come into life, and then the mind says, what do you mean by life?

Okay, let's see where that is, that life. You step out of time, your attention, you remove your attention from past and future, okay? How do you do that?

Well, a little help would be, what about now? What's wrong with now? Do I have a problem now?

Now? Of course I have a problem now, look at my bank statement. Of course I have a problem now, I need to move by the end of the month, of course I got noticed.

I'm not talking about the end of the month, or what's going to happen to your mutual funds. I'm talking about, do you have a problem now? No.

I can't see any. I'm trying hard to find a problem in this moment. Well, there's a stain, no there isn't, I'm just saying.

There's a stain here, is that a problem? No, it's a stain, okay. I have a backache, I don't, it's just an example.

I have a backache, is that a problem? Only if you start thinking about it and saying, am I going to have to live with that for the rest of my life? Or why do you always have a backache?

I wonder what's wrong with me. No, it's not a problem, it's a backache. It's just that.

You stay with what is now. Don't spin some stories about what is now. Don't, you know, you don't have to be judge it, compare it, say it shouldn't be.

You come into now. So the first level of now is whatever is around you, that's only level one. Level one of now is your sense perceptions.

Wow. And that's already a revelation. When you step out of being totally possessed, eaten up, eaten alive by your life situation, and you step out of that into just, even just becoming aware of sense perceptions, you're entering the now because you can only perceive now.

And you're not perceiving any problem. You're perceiving what is now. Sense perceptions, this room, the people, the incredible variety of human forms.

Amazing to see. Every human form is different and unique in some way. It's beautiful.

You can sit in a public place and be in the now and watch people. Nothing to do with your life situation. You're there as a presence, watching, perceiving this moment.

The incredible fullness of this moment around you in the form of life forms, human life forms, animal life forms, plant life forms, the air, the incredible forms and shapes that are continuously moving the spectacle of phenomena. Unbelievable variety. It's fantastic.

And you have no idea that this is going on around you when you're totally trapped in

your life situation, which really is your mind. So we are learning periodically to step out of that level that I call life situation and enter life. Life is now.

This was level one of now, what is around you. Be alert to that because otherwise you miss the whole thing because you're so concerned about your conceptual reality, which really is what a life situation is. You're so concerned about your conceptual reality that you miss reality.

Your conceptual reality eats up your entire attention continuously and you're worrying about your life, which in reality is your life situation, but you call it your life. It's not life at all. And so this is a dreadful fate for a person to be consumed by their life situation.

And so they miss life. They're trying to find the life, the fullness of life in their life situation. And they're hoping that if they can eventually sort out their life situation so that they can find life.

But if your life situation is all you have, you're never going to find life because your life situation is a set of thoughts and concepts in your head. So to become empowered, you need to rise, one could say you rise above your life situation, which doesn't mean you don't deal with things anymore. You still deal with things, but you realize there is a level or a dimension to you that is far more powerful and vital than whatever is happening in your life.

So accessing that dimension is vital. And that really is what spirituality is all about. Not having some weird ideas about this or that, or beliefs, it's nothing to do with ideas.

It's nothing to do with concepts. There's no such thing as spiritual concepts. Concepts are not spiritual.

They're not even spiritual thoughts. There's no such thing as a spiritual thought. A thought is not spiritual because thought is form.

Spiritual is the formless dimension in yourself. Level one, then, whatever surrounds you. You can say, yeah, but this is still form too.

Yes, it's form too, but it's not a mind form. It's not a conceptual form. It's what is here in the world of physical forms.

Be open to that. Level one of the now. Level two of the now, don't get attached to the numbers.

I'm just saying two. Level two of the now is feeling that you're alive. Level two is, so your attention was on what is around you.

The world is multifaceted. There's incredible play of phenomena all around you, and you acknowledge that, and it's beautiful. It has nothing to do with what your relationships are

doing at the moment or what your bank statements are doing at the moment or whether you have a job or you don't have a job or whether your wife has just left you or the husband has done this or whether you're, nothing to do with any of that.

You're stepping out into presence. Level two of presence is to feel that you're alive inside. You've already noticed that the world around you is alive.

Well, that's a big step forward. You have noticed that the world around you is vitally alive. So to notice that, you need to have stepped out of your life situation, your conceptual reality.

Wow. Okay, that was, you breathe. It's beautiful.

The play of forms. And then you feel that you inside are alive. Your body is alive.

You feel the aliveness in your hands, your arms, your legs, and the totality of aliveness, the global aliveness inside in the background. And you can still look around and see the incredible aliveness around you. Now, if you feel the body inside, you're already moving to an even more vital dimension than the vitality of life forms.

There's your body. It feels good to be embodied, to sense the aliveness, even in an everyday situation. When things are going, when you're listening to the news and say something dreadful has just happened, there will be negative growth next year in the economy.

Negative growth, what does that mean? We are now officially in a recession. Oh my God.

We are going to buy less at Christmas this, oh no. We are not going to run around like mad rabbits this Christmas. Oh, that's dreadful.

So even when you listen to the news, I'm exaggerating a little, but there's some truth in it. Even when you listen to the news, you can feel the aliveness within while they're saying we are now officially in a recession. The entire automobile industry of the United States may collapse and drag everybody else down.

And you feel the aliveness inside. So there you have something more vital than that. And if you are part of the automobile industry of the United States, and if it affects you directly or indirectly, when the situation arises externally, then you will deal with it.

You will address it in the now. And you accept whatever is, and you look at it, okay, what is it that I can do? And then you go into life, and then you go out again and look at your situation.

And you go back and find the balance between dealing with your life situation and entering life. So level two, set the aliveness in the body while you listen to the news, for example, or while the phone rings and somebody says, ah, ah, ah, oh dear, we need to

do something. Well, if anybody comes to you and says, oh, we need to do something, you step out of the life situation and become present where there are no problems.

So you can hang on to your inner body. And then an even deeper level of your life situation, which, of course, they are all connected. They are ultimately all one.

At the deepest level, the one that contains it all is the realization that underneath it all, who you are is not the thoughts that go through your head or whatever's happening externally, but you can actually sense within yourself that you are that in which all the phenomena appear. That's the deepest level of life. Life is the consciousness that you are, the I, the I am.

You attach nothing else to I am. The I am, it's the deepest, who you are in your innermost identity. That is consciousness.

It is formless. It is the light in which everything appears. And to feel yourself, even at this moment, to feel that nothing that can be defined is who you are.

Nothing that can be thought is who you are. Nothing that happens around you has anything ultimately to do with who you are in your essence. Success or failure ultimately has nothing to do with who you are.

Success cannot give you your true reality. Failure, success is not who you are. It's all the play of forms.

It's all to do with time. It's your life situation. Stepping out of that, into the power and the fullness of the present moment where you know yourself as consciousness itself.

Another word you could use as a pointer is to realize the stillness within yourself. Consciousness is still, alive, vibrant, but still. Underneath all the things that are happening externally and internally in your mind and your emotional field, you remain as that.

And that can be in any situation when you are the master, the spiritual master, knows him or herself as consciousness in any external situation. You can actually sense a spaciousness inside you no matter what's happening. And even while you're thinking, well, you're going to think much less because there's no reason to think totally unnecessary things all the time.

To sense always in the background, the I am, the stillness, that which is precious, something very precious, indestructible. And sometimes you may need to encounter a life-threatening challenge that suddenly comes in to sense that. But whenever a form in your life begins to dissolve or collapse, there's a greater chance to discover within yourself that which is beyond form.

So let's say the entire stock market collapses and then you get your statement and it says zero. That moment of looking at your balance and you say your mutual funds have gone from \$500,000 to \$5. So this form that was important to you has dissolved.

And you look at that and instead of resisting, because this is what is, ultimately it's only a figure on a piece of paper. Only when you start thinking does it become a big problem. But the reality of it is you're opening this thing, you're taking it out of the envelope and you're reading and there is little scribbles, computer printout, which has a little figure on it.

And that's all that it is in the reality of the present moment. Unless you make a problem out of it and start thinking what's going to happen to me in the future? How am I going to survive in my old age?

I've worked for nothing, 30 years of work for nothing. What does all that mean? It means it's a story around the simplicity of a figure on a piece of paper.

And then once you are trapped in that, you're lost. So to see very clearly, this is the master, you're becoming a master when you just see the simplicity of any moment without going into spinning stories around me, my past, my future. It was all in vain, I failed, it's all been pointless.

I'm never going to make money again. All mind stories, mind-created stories. So the solution to your financial, other problems is stepping out as much as you can into the aliveness of the present moment, which is who you are in your essence.

You are the now in which everything happens, the consciousness in which everything unfolds, the timeless space, and then look at the situation. So you're coming from a, you're rooted in a deeper place. And then you're dealing with the externals.

But always be very careful because the externals have a pulling power and you're living in a world that's totally hypnotized by the externals. And in a world that continuously tells you how important the external is. And every time you listen to somebody say, this is so important, you should be worried.

You should be in fear. You should think about this. Let's discuss it.

And the world has this pulling power. So you need to realize everybody's hypnotized into believing that this is all that there is. And this is absolutely serious and important.

It is important perhaps, but it is only relatively important. It is not of absolute importance. Of absolute importance is finding the essence of who you are.

And then deal with things from there. So that a different energy flows into, even into what you do. So the two are not separate.

Even your so-called life situation changes, is affected by the power of life itself when you are aware of that in yourself. So a different level of consciousness flows into what you do. A different energy flows into what you do when you realize that whatever you do is at best only relatively important.

Whatever happens is relative. The only one thing is absolute, and that is finding life, or as Jesus calls it, the fullness of life, which has nothing to do with your life situation. And the strange thing is the life situation tends to unfold with greater ease when you are connected with something, that dimension that is deeper than life situations.

And then even on the external level of your life situation, there's things happen more lightly, more easily. And that's the beauty of it. And this is the practice then, and no better opportunity than the present time when you're being challenged rather than being deluded for a few more years that all is well when it isn't, because eventually things are going to dissolve around you anyway.

And if they dissolve, don't dissolve around you, then you dissolve before they do. So it's better to see that fact now than wait until you're 92 years old. You may not be that alert anymore to find the reality of who you are and the reality underneath phenomena.

So here's the mastery of life is to live in two dimensions simultaneously and then see what happens. You're practicing then every moment and whatever situation that arises in your life becomes a practice for staying present within that situation to feel the depths of who you are, the power of now, the power of consciousness as you deal with things. So this is what it means to become empowered.

That's what everybody wants, but they're looking for it where they can't find it. They're looking for some power in their external life situation. The power must come from within.

It does not come from your thoughts or from whatever happens out here. So another way of putting this is look at whatever limitations arise in your life. Let's say you're trapped somewhere in some unpleasant situation or place and you want to get out.

Look at the situation. What is it that I can do? Or perhaps there's nothing you can do.

All right, no, it's a beautiful thing to see. At this present moment, there's nothing I can do. I can't even pick up the phone.

It's Sunday today. I can't call anybody. They're all, nobody's at work.

There's nothing I can do except be with what is. The next day, action arises. Not losing yourself in the action, another important thing, because it's very easy once you start to speak and to act, you totally lose yourself in that.

You will get stressed. The slightest stress means you've lost yourself in your life situation

again. It is possible to deal with things effectively without stress.

Just be more powerful than the situation. Most people, for most people, the situation is always more powerful than they, so they feel smaller than the situation. That's normal.

And that's a delusion because it all arises from consciousness. So you are actually far more powerful, the power of who you are is far greater than anything external, but that's, people don't know that. So they're always reacting to something, defending themselves against this or that, realizing that the situation actually has very little power.

And if your change of, your state of consciousness changes, external reality reflects the change. This does not mean that anything remains absolutely solid in external reality. It still is subject to continuous fluctuations.

So you don't attach yourself to anything, but it's beautiful to see that external reality reflects basically your predominant inner state. If your inner state is empowered, and it can only be empowered when you are not lost in your life situation, then the empowerment is reflected around you. And it may come in many forms.

It may come as financial abundance. It may come as anything, any form that the aliveness can take. So it's an incredible thing to discover that you are actually more powerful than the world around you.

Not in the narrow egoic sense that you say, I can control everything that happens, no. So this is a wonderful opportunity now to experiment with consciousness, with your life situation and your life. Where is the life at this moment?

Do you feel the aliveness of this moment? And then the universe uses you because it is going somewhere. There's an evolutionary impulse at work on this planet and everywhere else, because if it's happening here, it's happening everywhere, as above, so below.

Then the consciousness that wants to come into this world can freely flow through you and express itself. How? In many different ways.

According to your particular form, it might be some enlightened business. It may be that you are producing something that affects many people and brings that consciousness to others through some artistic creation, or this or that, innumerable possibilities, how you can be an opening for the evolutionary impulse of the universe that wants to come through. And then wherever you go, people will be affected by this transformed energy.

You cannot not affect the world. When you live in the new state of consciousness, whoever you come into contact with is affected by that. Even if you were a hermit, you would still affect the collective consciousness.

If you are a frequency holder, as I call it in a new earth, a frequency holder is somebody who is not very interested in going out into the world and changing the world or building up some huge, great organization to make the world a better place or to create a great work of art or to come up with some new discovery or write a great book. Not that there's anything wrong with these things. For some people, that is their life purpose.

But there are some other people who are not drawn to that, who are content with remaining in a relatively small circle of influence, a little, maybe just contemplatives is the old word for those people, people who feel, don't want to go out there and change the world. They just want to be present. And that's fine because they hold the frequency of that state of consciousness because whatever state of consciousness you are in affects the totality of consciousness, is part of the totality of consciousness.

So I was a frequency holder for a large part of my life, never very interested in going out into the world and achieving the great things. I was kind of happy being withdrawn and until something came into my life and I felt there's more that I can do, that was a thought that came. I was doing little work, workshops with people, 10 people at a time, 15 people for a number of years, giving talks in people's living rooms.

And then it was fine, in many ways, I felt happy being a semi-hermit and occasionally going out and doing little things, happy not being famous, that was never thought I would want to be famous. But then the thought came, I could do so much more in this world, but it doesn't seem to be happening. And one day I sat under an oak tree, you could call this, there's a question, later on we'll have some questions.

Somebody is asking a question about divine discontent. The question is, do you ever experience what might be called divine discontent? That is the discontent that leads to something very positive.

And you could say at that, there was a moment that came at that time when I experienced a mild form of divine discontent, which simply is a sense of, there's more than I can do, that I could do, but it's not happening. That's a mild form of divine discontent. It's not some unhappiness that says, oh, I have failed, I'm in my forties, and what have I achieved?

That's not divine discontent. That's just a form of normal unhappiness. With divine discontent, there is not some lot of mind activity around me and my life.

There's just a sense of this, my present life situation has these limitations around me, but I could go beyond that. I could be much vaster. The world needs what I know comes through me.

I know that the world needs that. So why isn't the world, I'm speaking for some of you too, why isn't the world opening up these channels for me? So that was the divine

discontent.

So I sat under an oak tree in Somerset, where I would sometimes go, magnificent oak tree, and I said to the universe, which ultimately to myself, please use me. I was talking to myself ultimately, because I am that, please use me, I'm here. So I was a frequency holder, and yet after many years of a frequency holder, I had this sense of, okay, now expansion is what is called for in this world, a moment of divine discontent, please use me.

I didn't hear any answer. And then I said something that some years later, I almost said, maybe I said too much. I said, I want acceleration.

Okay, and then I went home and nothing happened for a few months. I didn't know that while nothing was happening for a few months in my little cottage in Somerset, somebody there, I don't take it literally, the countdown has already started, like the rocket ship, which goes 10, nine, eight, seven, six, and then one day I woke up and say, I have to move. I have to move to the West Coast of North America.

And that was the beginning. And so the rocket ship had taken off suddenly, and finally I landed at the desk of Oprah a few years later. I never wanted that much.

It's too much. And then the lesson was to surrender to that. It wasn't too much.

It was what was needed. If I'd been stuck to some previous idea that I had about how my life should unfold, I would be saying, oh, I'm overwhelmed, it's too much. Well, this is surrender now to what is now, surrender to this enormous energy stream that's coming through.

You asked for it, you said acceleration. And there it is. And continuously, even in this, my life, many people believe my life situation must be wonderful.

In many ways it is, but no life situation is totally satisfying. And there are always things that happen and change. There's no ultimate certainty in any life situation.

You cannot derive long-lasting satisfaction from any life situation, even if you become famous. I can tell you that now. Your life situation has not the power to satisfy you for long.

The satisfaction needs to be found in life, and life is now. And if you find that, then your life situation is fine. It unfolds and becomes empowered, probably.

So don't expect your life situation does not have the power to make you fulfilled. And it does ultimately not have the power to make you feel unfulfilled. You have to go deeper where you are bigger than that.

Although there was this divine discontent for a little moment, I'm certainly not happier or

more fulfilled now than I was when I, as one magazine said, Eckhart Tolle suddenly emerged from complete obscurity. So when I lived in complete obscurity, I didn't know I was in complete obscurity, but... I was not less happy than I am now, and the state is the same.

So there's no sense, it is fulfilling to see that consciousness is evolving through this form, yes. But there's no increased happiness through that. The happiness was already there, basically, the sense of, because I was deeply rooted, as I still am, in life.

Life is always more vital to me than the life situation. I've always going, even now, I'm always a little bit out of balance, even now, although great things are happening, but I'm not recommending that to anybody. I'm just saying, I'm a little bit out of balance because I'm always more vitally drawn to the present moment and the aliveness of that than whatever I have to deal with on an external level.

So I'm always going a little bit too much, so sometimes it's a little bit chaotic around me because I don't deal with everything. If I dealt with everything, I would lose, I would become stressed, it's just too much. So many things just put aside, and then after a few months, they are not a problem anymore because the situation has changed.

And I don't do anything when I feel I'm not enjoying it anymore, stop. What's the point? What is the point in doing something that you cannot enjoy?

But don't prematurely say, okay, I definitely can't enjoy this. See if you can connect with the power of now and then do whatever you do. So don't immediately say, well, what I'm doing, definitely I could never enjoy, maybe, maybe not.

Just try connecting, stepping out of the situation into the power of now and then do. Perhaps you can enjoy it. And if you still can't, then go and do something else.

But no compromise, don't live with unhappiness or with continuous stress or frustration. That is dreadful way to live. The large part of the world lives like that.

So what a wonderful challenge here. And whatever comes where it's a life situation and the challenges of your life situation, they draw out that which is deeper. So without the challenges, you would be comfortably sitting in your armchair for the next 30 years or until you retire and watching your investments grow and grow and then drop dead.

And you would live with complete certainty that you're being looked after because you've got your life insurance and your investments are growing every year and there's nothing can possibly go wrong. And there's nothing, okay, everything is great. Watch TV every day for five hours.

And that's it. No evolution, no flowering of consciousness. And then there's somebody else who made a total mess of his or her life and ends up in prison and sits there for 20

years and suddenly wakes up in the midst of that and realizes I am life.

And the situation is just relatively unimportant to feel that who I am in my essence is beyond any limitation on the external level. So that's why I often get letters from people in prison that say, I have woken up in prison. I'm free.

I'm no longer unhappy. And I have another 20 years to do. No, I'm not unhappy anymore.

I rarely get people, I get letters from people who say, I've woken up because my investments are growing every year. In fact, I've never had a letter.

[Speaker 6] (1:02:35 - 1:02:35)

No.

[Speaker 1] (1:02:42 - 1:23:40)

Sometimes I get letters from people who wake up because they encounter some physical illness and often change happens then. Any challenge has the opportunity to wake up. If you're not being challenged by life, then wait, it'll come.

No, isn't that wonderful? That means whatever happens now, it's no longer some problem that comes into your life. It's a challenge.

It's not a dreadful thing. It's great. It's an opportunity to be more conscious, more present with what is.

So that brings us back to the first two lines of that book. Life is difficult. Of course, it's full of challenges.

But once you know that, and say, that's what it is, that's life, then it's no longer difficult. It just is what is. It only remains difficult if you have the idea stuck in your head that it shouldn't be.

It's a paradox. Life is difficult. And once you know that it's difficult, it's no longer difficult.

Knowing that it's difficult implies accepting that it's difficult. But to say it is difficult only when you resist life. So what this implies is it's when the resistance goes, then it's no longer called difficult.

It's challenging. And every challenge brings increased aliveness. My friend Steve, who is here, can testify to that because he was faced with a challenge recently of being stuck in a hotel room in Bombay with mad terrorists running all around the building for several days.

And he went deep inside. Wasn't difficult for him because he was already immersed in presence for many years. So he was able to step out of the situation, which certainly

could be called difficult, and go deep within into the power of the present moment, into consciousness itself.

What signs do you see in the past year or so, either positive or negative, of the progress of the human race towards change and growth? Do you think we as a species are on the right track or have we gone even further astray? From Julie, are we on the right track or have we gone even further astray?

If you look for evidence of the one, you will find it. If you look for evidence of the other, you will also find it. So if you want to convince yourself or others that we are definitely not on the right track, you will find plenty of evidence that we are not on the right track.

Just watch the news every evening. And if all the information that you have or the facts that you gather come from the media, then perhaps you won't find that many facts that we are on the right track. But if you look elsewhere, you will find that indeed change is happening in many humans at this time.

One is that we are here now. We are here at this very moment in the now. We are part of that transformation of consciousness.

Why else should we be here? We have been led here because we are part of that universal movement of the transformation of human consciousness. And even in the news, occasionally you have little glimpses that some change is happening.

The transition in the United States, a more conscious president after eight years of unconsciousness, that is a good sign. I've seen some statements coming from Obama that are quite encouraging. Some people have asked me, has he actually read *The Power of Now* or *New Earth*?

I don't know. But if I hear things like, simple things, but surprising things coming from a politician, things like you don't need to be disagreeable when you disagree with somebody. A very simple truth, but coming from a politician, it's an incredible thing.

It's almost a miracle. Because the implication is that you don't need to be identified with your mind beyond that. Whatever opinion you might hold, you don't need to be so identified with your mental positions that immediately you make somebody who holds a different mental position into an enemy.

That's what he's really saying, but he's pressing it in very simple terms. And so, and that's a new thing. We haven't had that in a long time in politics.

Or even you have occasionally a person like we had in the past in Russia. Gorbachev, compared to the previous Soviet leaders, Gorbachev was a highly evolved Buddha. Perhaps he was a Buddha or is a Buddha.

But even if we only compare him to the previous leaders, it's like day and night. Gorbachev, I remember he said when there was another one of many crises between the United States and Russia, and they asked him, what is your opinion of this crisis situation? And he just said, this too will pass.

So that's, occasionally you see some consciousness coming even into politics. And so we have this, now there's a good chance that consciousness is flowing into that crisis. Area, there's no guarantee because what Obama is moving into now is he's moving into the old, already existing ego created structures.

Now the question is whether he is able to sustain that state of consciousness that he's in now that is not dominated by ego, but goes beyond egoic conflict. Whether after having moved into all the political, economic, military structures that have been created by the collective ego, are these structures, and not only in his own country, but also he then has relationships through the structures with other structures in other countries which are equally ego dominated. Whether he's able to sustain the state of relative awareness or presence within that, or whether he will be pulled into greater unconsciousness through moving into those egoic structures, or he's able to maintain it and transform to some extent the old structures from within.

It would be a miraculous thing, but not beyond possibility. It is possible that he's able to do that, but the forces of unconsciousness around him will be quite strong. There is, you may be familiar with the phrase, I think it's called the military industrial complex, I believe that's the phrase.

And I always thought that phrase must have been coined by somebody like Chomsky or somebody in the 60s. But in fact, I recently learned that actually it was President Eisenhower who used that term for the first time when he was leaving office. He was actually giving a warning because he could see that there was an energy formation there that had its own momentum.

It was a very powerful, and of course he didn't say that, but it's an egoic energy formation. It doesn't mean that the people in it are evil. It's just, it's an energy formation created by the collective ego.

And of course, that is still there. Obama, this is not going to disappear the moment Obama moves into the White House. So we have something coming together there and remains to be seen whether he's able to sustain consciousness or whether the structures will pull him into unconsciousness.

So what we are doing here is all, it's not separate from that because ultimately it is the collective consciousness that creates whatever government you have. Whatever predominates in the collective consciousness is then reflected externally. And so as we are here, part of the transformation of consciousness that will have an effect on, it will

affect the totality of consciousness also.

So it's every single individual is vital in this. And any individual who is part of this transformation of consciousness as we are, otherwise we wouldn't be here. It goes beyond the personal.

We are part of the transformation of consciousness. And of course, that affects the totality of consciousness. So if there's beyond that, if there's something that you personally can do on the practical level, wherever you, wherever it might be in politics, if you're in politics or it might be at work, if you work for a corporation, it might be in your, some business that you have that is your own, anything that you can do and be more present with what you do and do it without the interference of the egoic consciousness, all that helps. So it's vital then that we bring this presence into whatever we do.

It is vital also that we don't complain too much about people who are not present yet because that's another way of being pulled into unconsciousness. The moment you complain about an unconscious person, and of course, when I use the term unconscious, I don't mean that they are, when I use the term unconscious, I mean that they are identified with the involuntary mind activity, which runs according to its old patterns. So they're completely in that, the old reactive patterns happen again and again and again, they're unconscious.

What they say is dominated, is controlled by that. That's unconscious. To be, not to be there as the aware presence behind your mind, but to be totally identified with the conditioned mind is unconsciousness.

So that's what unconscious means. So when you are confronted with an unconscious person, you can actually see that it's unconscious, but the important thing is not to complain about somebody else's unconsciousness. And to, how, that makes, that complaint is already an unconscious reactive pattern in you, and you are equating a pattern that operates in another human being with who that human being is.

So you've made it much more difficult for that human being by equating a pattern in that human being with who he or she is, you've made it more difficult for him or her to step out of it. And you yourself have become trapped again in a reactive pattern. So you see unconsciousness, spiritually speaking, still all around you, and that's fine.

You kind of look through it. You know it's there, but you look through. There on the surface, you have whatever reactive patterns the person manifests.

And you kind of, you see, it's like if you look through, not necessarily visual, I'm using a visual image, you sense your way through that, and you can feel that that is not who that person is. You don't have to tell this to yourself, but you can sense it. You can sense there is a human being underneath all that madness in everybody.

Even some politicians, not mentioning any names, there is a human being underneath there somewhere. Sometimes you have to look very deep, but it's there. So being pulled into unconsciousness can happen very easily.

We were talking it on the personal level and in politics. Similar example, just one more example of Second World War, we had in the person of Hitler and the movement of National Socialism, extremely, extreme egoic unconsciousness taking over a whole country. And so to some extent, the countries that were pulled into this, the Second World War, also were pulled into not as great unconsciousness as the originating unconsciousness, but into some unconsciousness also, because they did things which we would say, how can you bomb a city that is filled with civilians, millions of civilians, knowing exactly there's no military value whatsoever, we are complaining about terrorists, and the so-called good people, of course, the originating unconsciousness was even greater and even worse.

But it pulled even the other powers into bombing cities, even with atom bombs and firebombs, where there were only women and children, there were not even any men left because they were all fighting somewhere. So sometimes the response then becomes equally unconscious. So evil, if you want to call it evil breeds further evil, if you're not very careful, very present, or the response to terrorism, a few mad terrorists.

We have a question here, perhaps I'll read it, that's our next, and then we can come to some spoken questions. Every question is interesting, but this is from an anonymous questioner. One of the most puzzling human behaviors for me is to witness an act of retribution.

9-11 happens, and rather than stopping and asking who perpetrated this act of violence and what healing needs to occur, our response is to ask who did this so that we can inflict equal or greater pain and misery, thereby escalating the pain and generating cycles of violence that become even more difficult to stop as we have witnessed in the Middle East. Can humanity stop acting from its most base response? This touches on what we have just been talking about.

Can humanity stop acting from its most base response, which is the unconscious response? And the questioner mentions 9-11 happens, and rather than stopping and asking who perpetrated this act of violence and what healing needs to occur, our response is to ask who did this so that we can inflict equal or greater pain and misery. Well, the only thing that's even more stupid than this is to...

Even more stupid than hitting back at the unconscious person is to hit back somebody who didn't even do it. Just because you have to hit back, somebody, anybody will do. So the question is, can humanity stop acting from its most base response?

Yes. The most vital question is always to bring it back to yourself because it always

starts with the individual. Can I, so humanity is replaced with the word I, can I stop acting from my most base response, which is the old reactive pattern?

Or what, it might not even be aggression, it can be other reactive pattern, but it's an old reactive pattern and it's ego. Can I, well, you have to see when the next challenge comes into your life, whether or not the answer is yes or no. So I can't answer that, only you can answer it, but to answer it, even that, you have to see when the next challenge comes into your life and then say, okay, can I stop acting from my most base response?

It's a somewhat complicated question, but simple question or another simple question is, what am I doing? What am I saying? What am I feeling?

[Speaker 2] (1:23:57 - 1:50:38)

So let's begin with what I like to call bamboo tree. In yoga, it's called Mountain Pose, Tadasana. In traditional Chinese, Qigong, it's called Tree Pose, but I like to add the bamboo tree because the bamboo tree, it's firm yet flexible, but the most important thing is, is that it's hollow on the inside.

And that's what we are. We are actually space, 99% empty space. And it's only with the thoughts and the identification with thinking that we become contracted in the body and therefore, in a way, feeling solid and tense.

So bamboo tree can be used standing, it could be done seated anytime, standing in line at the supermarket. And all you're just doing is you are just standing and emptying yourself. So just you could stand with your feet a bit, hip width apart.

The knees are unlocked, not bent a lot, just unlocked. And the whole body is relaxed. So the shoulders are relaxed, the arms are relaxed, the feet, the legs, everything is relaxed.

And imagine your tailbone being drawn towards the earth, the crown of your head lifted towards the sky. You may wish to close your eyes and just feeling the breath, just allowing yourself to empty. If any thoughts arise, just notice them, let them go.

Return your awareness to the breath. Become the space, become the awareness that you are. So this bamboo tree is a good practice to do after any activity or before any activity.

Even it's before you, when the phone rings, instead of running and rushing to the phone to answer it, just stop, stand there for a few moments and just become alert, present and empty. And then move into your activity, into whatever motion that is called for in the moment. And in practicing this, you'll begin to feel the inner body that Eckhart calls the inner body, the feeling of aliveness within, the chi, the prana, the life force that is always flowing within.

But with the thoughts, the thinking mind, the attachment to the thoughts, the attachment to emotions that arise, do we become rigid and contracted and the chi is not able to flow. So with this, it's just an emptying out of everything. And you can even imagine any emotions or any negativity flowing right down on the body and out the soles of your feet and to the edge of the universe.

Okay, and then just gently begin to shake the right arm. And then you can begin to shake it even more. Just make sure that it's nice and loose, including the wrist, the elbow and the shoulder.

And shake it. So it's not a movement where there's effort. It's just like almost a shaking where you can just allow everything to loosen up.

And now the right foot and the right leg. So the ankle, the knee and the hip. Just allow everything to be loose.

Don't worry if you fall off balance. And now the left arm. Again, it's a constant scanning of the body to make sure everything is relaxed.

So in any Chö Gong, everything is done in the body in a relaxed way because we're wanting to have the chi flow through the body and the chi to move. And then the left leg. Scanning the leg, making sure from hip to the bottom of your feet, relaxed.

And now the whole body. So as we shake, we just allow ourselves to fully be relaxed. And it's a good idea if we can keep our feet on the floor, the heels can come up, the knees are bent.

I wouldn't jump with locked knees, so you want to bend the legs. And you can shake as gently as you like or as hard as you like. And then perhaps eventually you begin to feel the chi moving and the chi actually shaking you, your body, moving you.

So the neck is loose, the jaw is loose, everything is loose. And this shaking Chö Gong, it's actually one of my favorites because what this does, it not only unblocks any of the stagnant, contracted energy in the body, but it helps the chi to flow. So the natural life force to start flowing through the body.

You can make any sound you'd like, just a, oh, even have your tongue loose. Everything is nice and loose. So scan the body from head to toe, making sure that everything is loose.

And shake a little harder. And it's a good idea if you can do this exercise for at least 10 minutes, if you're a beginner, do it for at least 10 minutes. Because if you're not used to feeling what the inner body feels like, what this chi, this life force, this living energy feels like, this is a good exercise because you'll see at the end when we stop.

So shake a little harder. A little bit more. Now, check out what's happening in the mind because if you have this thought of, oh, this is stupid.

This is a really dumb exercise. It's actually one of the natural exercises that kids even do it. Kids jump up and down, they shake.

Animals, they'll shake. You may even notice when you go pet a dog sometimes and as you go pet the dog and when you released your hand from the dog, the dog will just shake. He's releasing that energy that has been passed.

So through from the human hand onto the animal. And you know, it just sometimes will shake it off. And the human emotions that arise, if we're identified or we resist the emotion, then it gets lodged because it's energy.

All thought, all emotions is an energy. It can get just lodged with it somewhere in the body. So just continue to shake a little harder.

Allow the, yes, just the neck to be loose, the shoulders. Forehead, everything's loose. And still focusing on the breath, keeping your attention in the body.

So you can feel, just really get into this shaking. Be in present, be in the moment. Not lost in thought, but just fully feel the body.

A little more, a little harder. And as a one Chagong teacher, I went to Chagong class. We used to start this every class, shaking, usually for about 10 minutes.

But then one day we were in a class, 15 minutes went by, it's an hour long class. 20 minutes went by, 30, 40, then 50 minutes went by. And finally we stopped the shaking.

So we only had 10 minutes to do other things. And then somebody after class said, why did we shake for so long? And he said, because I was waiting for the last one to surrender.

So fully get into this. And you'll notice after doing this, it could be done daily. Actually, I used to do this daily and it's a good practice to do daily because it gets the chi flowing.

But I forget what I was gonna say. Oh well, it's gone. Ah, remembered.

Okay, so it's nice to start with this practice for this exercise for 10 minutes. But as you get to just do it, you can even just do it for, if you're fully present while doing it, surrender as you do this. You can just do it even for one minute and it would be amazing to feel the chi flow.

So let's shake a little harder. Everyone shake us just a bit more. You can even shake with your arms up.

And if the chi starts flowing and you start feeling it and you find that the chi will want to move you, so you might want to shake in any way that you like, any way that the chi wants to move. Keep feeling the body. Everything is relaxed.

You may notice some blocked energy begin to loosen up and you can sigh it out through the mouth or whatever way that feels like the energy just needs to be released. Imagine the negative chi, the stagnant energy flowing out through the bottom of your feet to the edge of the universe. So one last good shake.

And then when you're ready, just stop and feel. Perhaps you feel the tingling, a warmth, or a numbness. This is the inner body, the chi, the prana, the life force, the feeling of aliveness within, the energy, which is your bridge, your access to stillness.

And if you'd like, you could just, if you'd like to feel what that energy feels like outside the body, because even though the chi flows in, chi extends beyond the body. Hold your hands up in front of you, palms facing in. And you just go in slowly and gently in and out with your hands.

Your hands not touching, but feel what's between the hands. Perhaps you can feel this energy, something there. And this is life, the life force, the energy that's within you, within me, within the trees and the animals, the one life that connects us all.

And then when you're ready, let's just store that energy right into the belly, into the dantian, which is about three, four finger widths below the navel and in towards the back spine. Let's just say it's in the belly. And then when you're ready, just return to bamboo tree, emptying yourself of the last moment because the last moment's gone.

And only this moment exists. So just allowing the energy of the last moment to pass through, dissolve until as always there are new forms that arise to the next moment. You're rising, which can only happen now.

So let's begin to just clear the energy field of any leftover stagnant chi that may be blocked in the body. And what I do is a clearing. So you gather the chi into your arms and just comb out your energy field.

Your fingers are pointing towards your body. And you're feeling what's between your fingertips and your body. And you're combing out the energy.

You're not touching the body, but you're just combing your energy field. And in your mind's eye, focusing it out down, the energy right out through your feet. And inhale, gathering the chi, exhale, combing.

Just staying present in the moment, in this move. You don't want to go into the future and that means even thinking about getting to the bottom of your feet, but just staying conscious, alert, aware of this. So we did the front body three times.

We'll do the side body three times. And then the back body three times. So if there's any of the two exercises, these two, the shaking and the clearing, are probably the two major ones to just sort of clear the energy field, to clear the energy of any blockages.

And then the back body, and when you're finished, return to Bamboo Tree. And just notice how you feel. The most important thing, the primary importance, is stillness.

The form, the movement, is secondary. And as we begin to feel the inner body more, we also begin to sense stillness more. Be able to sense the stillness of all this energy that's all around, that's within, and being connected and rooted to stillness, you begin to witness that this energy that is here, within, moves through you.

It's a creative life energy, life force, that wants to create and move through you, that wants to express its consciousness, expressing itself through you. And this energy is the purest life force, purest life energy. That just is.

And with this clear energy then, being connected to stillness, you'll find, whether it comes, moves up, and uses the mind through words, or through just a touch, and this energy is love. It's filled with peace. It's filled with stillness.

And this stillness is the true healer. So we can do these exercises, and there's many Qigong exercises that's used for healing, but you can still be in your mind and thinking a lot, and you may or may not get better, but really the true healer is stillness. And when you're connected to consciousness, to your God essence, we begin to realize that the form is not so important as the mind makes it out to be.

So healing happens, not only can it happen on the physical level, but most important, it happens on the spiritual level. And when we're healed spiritually, it's like it won't matter even if we're healed physically, because we realize that the physical body is not who we really are. It's the gift, the expression of consciousness, and that our consciousness is who we really are, the consciousness that was never born and never dies.

And being rooted in this consciousness, we allow the expression of consciousness to take its form in birth and in death, stillness is who we are, our true nature. And then the form of this moment, the form of this body is beautiful. It too is who we are, but not in the fullest sense.

So the practice of the bamboo tree, being hollow, so that the form of the moment, whatever is in expression, and as all forms are impermanent, will dissolve. So it too, then, you can allow by being a bamboo tree, to allow it to dissolve. Hi there, I have a friend who very suddenly recently lost his mother, and I'm watching him try to process this.

And I'm wondering if you have any words of comfort based on your insights on death and dying.

[Speaker 1] (1:50:39 - 2:06:11)

Thank you. Now dealing with death and dying, which is of course everywhere around us, although it's to a large extent hidden in our society, because society is not yet comfortable with acknowledging the pervasiveness of death and dying, without taking refuge into some kind of belief structure. I'm not saying that every belief structure, that every belief that you may have about death is wrong, but I'd like to approach death without telling you this or that, without even telling you, they are waiting for you on the other side, you're going to meet again.

I don't want to go there, but to something more, I'm not saying this won't happen, and I'm not saying it will happen, but to leave it at a more vital level that does not require some kind of story making, even if the story is true, some kind of conceptualization in your head. So to be with a fact of death, somebody close to you, or in your case, it's indirectly. So your job is to be with someone who has suffered loss.

And so you are dealing with it indirectly with this, your friend's grief. And so in your case, of course, rather than, I would recommend, rather than tell your friend some story that they are going to survive, or you will meet again, or they have moved, just be, accept what your friend feels fully, the grief that your friend feels, and your friend's job is to accept the fact of death. Now, if you are able to accept not only the fact of death, which is all around you continuously, but also the fact that whatever you feel at this moment, the sadness or the grief, say yes to both the dead body that you might see and the grief that you feel.

Bring an acceptance to that rather than thinking it shouldn't be, it should be otherwise. Many people are shocked when they encounter death in our civilization because nobody has told them, not really, that everybody around them is going to die. They know it as some abstract fact at the back of their heads.

They know that, yes, they're going to die. And it's another abstract fact in the back of your mind is that I'm going to die too, but you don't really believe it until perhaps somebody very close to you dies, and then it begins to dawn on you that I'm going to die too. And then their mind will push that out of the way again.

As you may know, in some Buddhist countries, the monks regularly visit the morgue where they keep the dead bodies on display, and they sit there for a few hours at a time and meditate on death. They meditate on the fact of impermanence of the physical form, which the Western world has hardly heard of. Impermanence of the physical form can't be.

Death is a travesty, it shouldn't be happening. So they contemplate the impermanence, or if you go to India where soon after death, they take the dead body and they burn it. And everybody watches.

To a Westerner, that is, oh, this is dreadful. Well, that's what it is. That's what happens to the physical form.

If one had lived with the, as in ancient older cultures, they lived in closer proximity to the fact of death, and therefore had greater acceptance of the naturalness of death, for us, it's more difficult. But we need to learn that to realize that the physical form is impermanent. And if you can accept a great loss, and death is one of the greatest losses of death of somebody close to you, if a great loss comes into your life, and if you can be in a state of non-resistance when this dear person that has been in your life for so many years suddenly disappears and leaves behind this emptiness, you can be in a state of non-resistance to that, and even non-resistance to whatever you feel.

If you feel grief, allow yourself to feel the grief. You can be the awareness or the space for that. Then you go beyond unhappiness.

You may still feel grief, but you go into a state of deep inner peace, particularly in the face of death. Whenever something, great loss comes into your life, it leaves behind a space, an emptiness. Let's imagine it could happen to anybody.

Maybe this body or that body suddenly goes plop, and suddenly there's an empty chair where before there was a body. It's really, this is how it is. If you could see how all pervasive death is, if you imagine, I like to use the analogy of a soap bubble.

If you imagine every body here is a soap bubble, and any of the soap bubbles could go pop at any moment, and you know what happens to a soap bubble when it goes pop, there's nothing left, just a little drop. That's strange, because a minute ago there was something there, and a minute later, there's nothing there. Now, if you are totally attached to the form of the soap bubble, then it's dreadful, because that was, but the essence of the soap bubble wasn't the form of the soap bubble, because that was insignificant.

The essence of the soap bubble was the space in the soap bubble. And so, nothing is really lost. And in fact, I sometimes like to use the expression, a hole appears in the fabric of your existence when great loss suddenly happens.

So there's a fabric, everything is in place. You have a house, and you have your relationships, and you have your job, and you have this and that. It's all in place, but it won't be in place for long, because sooner or later, a little thing is going to, and a big hole, I'm now using a different analogy, a big hole happens in the, or a small hole.

My investments, small hole, small loss. Somebody close to me dies, huge loss. Some kind of loss, loss means there was, where there was something, there's now nothing.

Where there was somebody, there's now nobody. And that's where the pain comes from, is the emptiness. I experienced it acutely, many years ago, I was visiting my mother

when my stepfather died, and he was always sitting in the same chair, many years.

And so I arrived at my mother's place, and I had the strangest experience when I saw the empty chair. He had always been in it, and suddenly, he was gone. It was just an empty space.

There was nobody sitting in the chair. Just an empty space. And that was actually a deep realization of the formless.

The formless dimension comes into your life when a form in your life disappears. And if you can not, if you can be with it, not resist it internally, it becomes transformed into a spiritual deepening, and you get to a very deep place within yourself. And in that very deep place within yourself, that is the formless essence of all life, and that's the grace that's hiding behind every loss and every death, that it leaves behind formlessness.

The form disappears, and for a moment, you're aware of the formless. And that is the spiritual, when you cannot, if you don't resist it, but allow it, that great deepening happens. And suddenly, you go so deep that you realize that death is not ultimately real.

Without formulating any more theories, it's a deep unknowing that the essence of life is formless. The essence of who you are is formless. It was, what was it, Leonard Cohen, Singer?

There's a song, I believe, that goes, there is a crack, a crack in everything. That's how the light gets through. And of course, there's very deep truth.

There's a crack in everything, which really means every situation, eventually you'll find there's a crack in it, which where the form begins to collapse. Any structure, any situation, and that's where the light comes through. And that's what you learn, and that's what the Buddhist monks learn when they go to the morgue.

They become at home with that fact. So there is even behind, death is not the most dreadful thing. There's actually beauty hiding behind it.

So great opportunity, wait for the next crack to appear in your life, it may be small, or it may be large, and then see that there's grace hiding there, and the light, which is the formlessness, the formless, shines through. And this is why some people have gone, even people who have had never any spiritual training or any spiritual teaching, may not have read any spiritual book, it has happened occasionally that some people who experienced deep loss in their lives became transformed and suddenly became awake through their loss. And this is, I believe, how the first spiritual teachers, thousands of years ago, it happened to them, they must have had deep loss in their life, and through the deep loss and acceptance, because they couldn't resist any longer, it was too painful, they accepted, and suddenly through the opening, the formless, they lost everything.

The light comes through, the formless essence of all life, and you are in touch with that suddenly, you are that. And from there you know that death is not ultimately real, just as the physical form is not ultimately real, it's a little bit, every physical form is a little bit dreamlike, a dreamlike temporary appearance. But there's something there that is real, but that has no form and it cannot really be named.

That's why the Buddha calls it emptiness, so that you can't form some image around it. It's, of course, very clever, because no matter how hard you try, emptiness is the one word that you can't form an image around it or believe in it. Any other word that you use, well, I use sometimes formlessness, that's pretty hard too, but emptiness is even better, perhaps.

And of course, the Western people, Western scholars say Buddhism is life-denying, because they don't understand in what sense, in what deep sense the word emptiness is used in Buddhism. So they say it's life-denying. And then if you ask them, then why is the Buddha smiling?

They say, oh, I don't know. If Buddhism is life-denying, what is there to smile about? But the Buddha is quite blissful, but he's denying life.

There must be something wrong here. It's not, it's actually supremely life-affirming, but it's not equating life with the forms of life. It's going to the essence of life, the unmanifested, timeless essence that lives through each form, appears as each form, and then disappears again as that form.

The one consciousness, the one life, and death is an opportunity to experience that, to be that, to go into that.

[Speaker 4] (2:06:17 - 2:06:46)

The hardest word that I'm having trouble with right now is responsibility. And I have a hunch that most of the things that I consider responsibility are just my ego telling me things I have to do. But I also, when I think about the future of the earth and human evolution and stuff like that, sometimes I have big emotions of responsibility.

So I'm just curious. Thank you. About the right relationship to the word responsibility.

Okay, thank you.

[Speaker 1] (2:06:54 - 2:14:30)

Yeah, it's a strange word. It has been pointed out that if you look at the word, it seems to be talking about the ability to respond. So to take responsibility for, what is it that you can take responsibility for primarily?

It's taking responsibility for your state of consciousness, which determines what kind of

world you create. Because you are humanity. Humanity is an abstract concept, doesn't exist.

Humanity is the human being. You are humanity. So for humanity to take responsibility, you need to take primarily responsibility for your state of consciousness, because only a diseased or dysfunctional state of consciousness produces a diseased and dysfunctional world out there.

By world, I mean the human-made world that has been imposed on what's already there, the planet, which is potentially, of course, a paradise. The planet, pristine, unbelievable jewel. The being of great intelligence.

We are not separate from it, but the being is going through a transitional process. And every transitional process is critical. It may or may not work, in which case the being will go some other way.

But your state of consciousness determines what kind of world you create, what kind of action you take, and what consequences your actions have. So here, this is why my main work is to address the cause of dysfunction, which lies in the human mind. The dysfunction of the human mind, or as it is sometimes called in Zen, the sickness of the human mind.

So, as I see it, and I don't think anybody who reads history can doubt it, there is a deep-seated dysfunction in humans, has been there for thousands of years. And if there's no shift in that, then the dysfunction will destroy us. It probably won't destroy the planet because the planet has enormous resources, but it will take a while, would take a while for the planet to recover.

All you have to do then is primarily take responsibility for your state of consciousness now. Now. And this is what the entire teaching really is about.

What is my state of consciousness at this moment? Am I generating disturbance? Am I generating negativity?

Am I generating conflict and suffering for myself and others? Am I generating inner pollution? Am I polluting my beautiful, the beautiful being that I am with continuous absurd movements of thought producing negative emotions, producing an entire entity that is illusory that I call the me.

So to take responsibility, it needs to be just, of course, an awakening where you can say, okay, I will take responsibility now. Some people don't know that there is even the possibility of taking responsibility. That's why you are so important.

Anybody who realizes it, you are the beginning of the transformed world. I don't know who first coined the famous phrase. You hear it quite often these days.

You need to be the change, that the change that you want to see out there, you need to embody that. And that's not primarily what you do. There's something more primary than what you do.

It's who you are. Who you are is your state of consciousness. Whatever you do flows out of that.

So that's the primary is that. So the change is the transformed state of consciousness. Now, that is your responsibility.

Anybody, once you've seen that, that's your responsibility. Now you know it. People who are not yet at that level, don't realize it, and that's fine.

You can't expect the whole world already to be at that stage. It's enough for you to take responsibility, knowing there's still a few millions others who don't know that they can take responsibility because they live in such unconsciousness that they see the entire evil in others. What they see as evil, it's all in them.

And they make half the world into their enemy. It's all out there. That's fine.

Only those are required to take responsibility who are up to it. But even those who are totally unconscious still, on the one hand, they don't know what they're doing. Obviously, as Jesus said on the cross, they know not what they do.

In other words, they are in the grip of unconscious forces, or unconscious mental, emotional streams. They don't know what they do. They cannot be held responsible.

And people say, well, they should be held responsible. No, they can't, but they don't know what they do. However, the fact that they are not responsible because they can't be responsible does not mean that they do not suffer the consequences of their unconsciousness.

So they generate suffering. And eventually, suffering is the fire in which the ego gets burned up, the collective ego and the personal ego. That's the long way, the slow way, the painful way.

And then there is a shortcut, which is any spiritual teaching, it cuts through that, the painful way, the long way of waking up, more and more suffering. The planet might not endure such a long learning process for humanity. So if the learning process of humanity does not become shortened, it is doubtful that the planet can allow humanity to learn through further suffering for another 500 years, or even 200 years, or even 100 years.

So that's, you're responsible for all that.

[Speaker 3] (2:14:38 - 2:15:28)

I don't know how you'd label this question. Is this on? Okay.

I've met some people, or had conversations with people who are going through what might be called a crisis of awakening. And it seems like they have, their identification with self is mostly fallen away. And they're in a kind of terror.

And they feel like they're going insane. And I kind of, I mean, I'm not there myself, but I've had those times when it's like giving up all control over everything feels kind of scary. And I just wondered if you could speak to that.

[Speaker 1] (2:15:29 - 2:35:37)

Okay, thank you. Yes, I've also encountered people like that. The mind feels suddenly scared.

The image really is the ego is still there to some extent, and it becomes a little panicky. I'm not in control anymore. But there is a place, so one can lose oneself in that, but I would advise a person like that to look for a place that is not confused inside, a place that is not scared.

Many people say they're confused or scared, but really the way out of it is really always the fuller acknowledgement of the present moment. Because the rest of it, all that confusion and feeling scared is you're not in the present moment, you're in your mind again. And your mind is saying, oh, my life is falling apart.

I have to start worrying again, because otherwise it's all going to fall apart. So once you realize that you've moved out, the realization needs to be there of that, okay, I'm lost in the mind again. Okay, you're not lost, because you know that you're lost.

The moment you realize it's happening, for a while you may not realize it's happening, you're so identified with your panicky thoughts that you're completely in them, you don't even know what is happening to you. And then time may pass while you're completely in your thoughts, and you're just, oh, I think I'm going mad. I just don't know, I can't figure things out anymore.

I don't, they're not, I can't work things out. Don't know about, the mind says you should have an opinion about everybody, and I don't anymore. You shouldn't have an opinion about every situation you're in in your life.

I don't know what to think about my life anymore. That's dreadful, that's the mind. And of course, the opposite is true.

If you don't know what to think about your life anymore, then you're beginning to wake up and realize there's no such thing as your life. There's only life. Your life is a mental construct.

It's a story, the story of me. So, it's always the moment you realize it's happening, or if you're trying to help somebody, bring your attention to the present moment. This is the exit point out of confusion.

You can't be confused when your attention moves into the present moment, because the present moment is always simple. There's always a simplicity about it. The complexity is in the mind structures, the unobserved mind of the ego.

So simply take your attention into the present moment, and then confusion suddenly dissolves, dissolves, because the mind says, I need to work something out, I need to understand something. No, you don't. All you need to do is respond to this moment.

Either this moment may require action or it may not require action. Just be there for this moment. And then it becomes simple.

You cannot do more than one thing at a time, for example, in this moment. No matter how much you have to do, you can only do one thing. Well, you can do two things, but it gets hard.

Basically, you have to do one thing at a time and give it your attention, or do nothing and bring attention to sense perceptions. Look around and get a sense of what this moment feels, what it is, what does it mean, this moment? First of all, it means what you see and perceive, because that's this moment.

And that's already a revelation because you might have been so trapped in your mind that you were completely unaware of your surroundings. And you didn't realize there was a beautiful tree there and there were clouds there. You didn't realize that there's a sound of the wind outside.

You didn't realize that you are breathing in the air. You didn't realize that all those things around you are vitally alive. You didn't realize it because you were stuck in your head, thinking about your problems.

And so the beginning of the present moment is that, oh, and then you can go a little deeper. Then you can experience the present moment as the energy field in your body, as the aliveness in your body. Oh, and then you can go even deeper and experience the present moment as the awareness of all this, rather than the present moment isn't the flower as such.

The flower appears in the present moment, but essentially what the present moment is, it's the consciousness in which you see the flower. Otherwise there would be no flower. Remove the consciousness, I don't know what's left.

No flower. You all know the famous saying, the tree in the forest, if a tree falls in the forest and there's nobody there to hear it, does it make a noise? And of course it doesn't,

because noise implies not only a sensory organ, it also applies a consciousness that's perceiving through the sensory organ that brings about what we call noise.

And without that, there's no noise. And you can even follow that up and ask other similar questions. But what I'm pointing to is the present moment in essence is not the things, the things appear in the space of the present moment.

It's always present moment. You can't get out of that. Your life is always one with now.

Your life and now are one. If you doubt that, then let me know one day when you can say, my life is not now. Or maybe you remember when it wasn't now, not possible.

Life and now is synonymous. Life is now, now is life. But the mind says, yeah, but what does that mean?

Isn't that just words? No, it's more than words. The words are pointing to a realization.

And that is whatever appears has to appear in the present moment, but in itself is not the present moment. It is a form that appears in the space of now. Everybody in this room or wherever the body is, is a form that appears in the space of now.

Whatever happens, whatever thought comes, whatever emotion is felt is a form that appears in the space of now. And that now is consciousness, timeless, ever present. You are that, I am that.

So that's really what the present moment is. So ultimately it's yourself, it's consciousness and you are consciousness. So bringing attention to the now takes people out of confusion.

The now begins with sense perceptions. So encourage people or do it to yourself. If you find you become lost in your mind, come into your senses first, touch something, whatever, any surface, feel it, then look.

Already confusion subsides because your attention gets away from thinking into the sense, the act of perception. Then listen, even less and less confusion. What is there to confused about right here?

Nothing. Nothing. Then breathing.

And breathing takes attention into the inner body. Alive, it's alive. Where's the confusion?

It's gone. You stopped giving attention to your thoughts, the confusion is gone. And then you go even deeper into just the spaciousness of stillness.

No confusion in there. And then it's fine. Every time that happens, use that process of

reorientation of focus of your consciousness into now.

So this is the advice you can give and you do it with people when they come to you in a state of confusion, or to say, okay, sit there, okay. Okay, look around, look, touch something, look at this. Listen to the rain, listen to the wind, listen to the birds, listen to the car.

Be there as the presence for it. Confusion can end very quickly that way. Present moment is the exit point.

Out of confusion is the point of exit out of your mind. It's always there. You just have to acknowledge it.

So, and when it happens again, same process. No more confusion. It's a shift for people.

You get drawn back into the old consciousness and step out again. That's why we call the awakening process. For most people, it is a, we are transitional.

Most of the people who are going through this, we are transitional beings from, it's a very significant and incredible thing, from one way of being, one state of consciousness that's been there for thousands and thousands of years to a different state of consciousness. And so we live, many people live in two worlds and two states, still shifting. And gradually, awareness takes over from continuous thinking.

And then it's all different. It's like, I sometimes call it as you, as I say, at the end of the new earth, a new species is emerging on the planet. One could almost say that we used to look the same, but your inner state is so different from the normal insane state that it's like a completely new species.

And yet it's already, it's already arising in you. It's not something that you need to arrive at some future point. And I want to become a new species.

It's already arising. From an anonymous questioner. I have read that as long as we are in a body, we have a shadow.

Is this true for you? What is your shadow? Oh.

Let me think. What is your shadow? Do you have a shadow?

Okay. The answer is, part one of the answer is yes. Part two of the answer is, if you ask anybody if they have a shadow and they say no, then you know that they have a shadow.

And if they say yes, they don't. Because shadow, which is just a way, it's a Jungian term, which I don't normally use, but what it means is an area of unconsciousness that you're not aware of, because if you're aware of it, it's no longer unconscious, and it's not really

a shadow. So if it's an area of unconsciousness in your life, and if it's truly a shadow or an area of unconsciousness, then, of course, you won't know it.

You might know there's a certain behavior pattern, but you will not recognize it as an area of unconsciousness. You might say, of course I get furious every time somebody mentions this or that, because, and you'll have some justification, it's not recognized as an unconscious reactive pattern. Or you might be totally unconscious of it and say, I'm never angry.

Why do you accuse me of always being angry? So it's right there, but you don't know it, you deny it. So the shadow then, anybody who says no, they probably have one.

If they say yes, then they have seen that there are still certain areas where there's certain behavior patterns still operating. Of course they are, because as long as somebody has a body, certain patterns operate, certain behavior patterns. You might, well, idiosyncrasies, ways of doing things.

So if you're aware that that's there, then that's all that it is. It's not a totally conscious thing. It's not a shadow as such.

We can talk also in terms of ego. You have, if you're aware of certain patterns in you that originated from ego, and they still operate to some extent, although you live mostly in awareness, sometimes there's a momentum behind certain behavior patterns, like they're not being energized anymore, but it's still there. And so if you're aware of it, it's not really the ego anymore.

Ego implies unobserved mind. Ego implies you don't know it's the ego. There's no awareness, there's just the conditioned mind doing its thing, acting out.

The moment you bring awareness to it, there's a light on it. So if the light shines, it's shining on the shadow, it's not a shadow. Shadow means there's an absence of light, and light means consciousness.

So ego is no longer ego when you know there's ego. It's only truly speaking ego when you don't know it, and there's unconsciousness. Short question here.

Do you experience the earth as Gaia, an entity with her own consciousness? Yes, of course, just as the one consciousness animates this physical form, the one consciousness animates also the earth as a living, intelligent being. Not only the earth, the sun also.

The sun, there's far more both to the earth and to the sun than we realize. The sun is the life-giving principle in the manifested. It's almost in the manifested, sense-perceived world, the sun is the closest we can get to what we could call the divine, because it's a continuous outpouring of energy, continuous giving, millions and millions of years, a vast

outpouring of energy, and we think it's just a physical process, like in our narrow interpretations, we say that it's a huge atomic reactor or whatever, but there's far more to the sun than that.

It's a living being of great intelligence, and so is the earth. So let's see what the earth is going to do with the little microbes that are crawling around its surface. What would you do if, what does the body do if viruses or bacteria invade it to get rid of them?

It raises the temperature, it gets a fever. The earth could do any number of things. The earth has barely noticed that humans are here because its time, constant time is very different.

Humans have been here for a very short time. The earth is just beginning to notice that the humans have arrived here and are not doing much good now. So, and then the intelligence that governs earth life, which is no more than, it's the one consciousness moving through that form of earth, can do many things.

It could get rid of most humans without any violence. For example, the simple thing, for example, of reducing fertility in humans so that neither men nor, either in men or women or both, and then within 100 years, humanity would shrink to very little. If the earth wanted to do it, it can do many things to get rid of humans if it needed to get rid of humans.

But we haven't reached that stage yet. We would, if there's no change in consciousness, eventually we will reach a stage where the earth will say, okay, we'll have to get rid of this life form. And there's no problem, it can do that easily.

But we have not yet reached that stage. There's still the possibility of something very different happening, which will not end in the elimination of humans, but will be a flowering of consciousness, the consciousness of the earth through the humans.

[Speaker 4] (2:35:43 - 2:37:10)

For the past several years, I've been making a concerted effort to live a, especially sort of conscious, present, spiritual path, and doing yoga and meditation and retreats and that sort of thing. And now when I hear people talk about spiritual stuff, I kind of cringe. It's like, I feel like there's this spiritual thing that's like separate, separate from this, this special dimension.

At first it was really great, because I was meditating like 10 hours in a weekend and I could tell everybody how cool it was and how special and unique I felt, practicing this special spiritual life. And now I just, I listen to what you say and other people say, and I just want to hear about like how I'm no one. And I mean that sincerely in being in this, but just not having to, even though I am conscious, all these words that just seem to get in the way a lot of the time.

I mean, they're concepts and everything. But I just, I hear the, I feel the sweetness of not, just really not having to be this special, unique, spiritual person on top of being a regular person. It's like this double-decker sandwich that I got to carry around and I'm, and it's getting stale.

And I don't know. I don't know if there's a question in there, but maybe you could speak to that.

[Speaker 1] (2:37:10 - 2:38:12)

Thank you. Yes. Okay, thanks.

Well, you overdid it a little bit with your spiritual practice. And hence the reaction now, because you have to get back to some normality after all that specialness over that, both your spiritual practice, where you thought of yourself as special and your practice as special. You went quite far to an extreme and you're now experiencing the reaction to that extreme.

And that's good. In other words, you don't want to hear about anything spiritual anymore. I've had it, right?

So you overdid it. Now there's a reaction. Don't mention to me anything spiritual anymore, you say.

But of course, you know, the famous expression, what is it? The baby in the bath water. Don't throw out your baby with the bath water.

It's all spiritual.

[Speaker 4] (2:38:12 - 2:38:13)

It's all spiritual.

[Speaker 1] (2:38:13 - 3:00:14)

It's so separate. So first you went to that extreme. Now you go to an extreme of reaction and eventually you end up in the middle where every moment is spiritual as it is.

There's nothing special. Spirit is not separate from daily existence. So that's, when we say spiritual, we are not referring to some realm out there that is to be achieved at some point where you become more special than you are now.

It's not going to happen. It's here and now. We're going deeper into the here and now.

That's spiritual. Now you are a little bit tired of these words because you went too far to that extreme. So you have to realize, if you're a little bit perhaps like a Christian who was once very religious and suddenly got fed up and then occasionally I have people in

talks who are ex-Christians.

And the moment I say, occasionally I say Jesus said, they go, oh, don't talk to me about anything. It's remotely Christian. I don't want to hear that.

I've had all that. So they don't realize because of course they had a somewhat distorted view of what the whole thing was about. So they didn't, but they can't stand the terms anymore.

And that's fine. It's a phase. You will come through that.

Maybe it's happening already. It's the ordinariness. Spiritual means the more spiritual you are, the more ordinary you are, the more non-special you are.

And again, for the ego, that means, okay, I have to become more non-special. How do I become ordinary? Okay, I need somebody to teach me to be ordinary.

So I understand your dilemma and perhaps you understand it also. And so this, nothing special, chopping wood, carrying water, as Zen defines spirituality ultimately, what is the spiritual life? Chopping wood, carrying water, which is the kind of thing you do in Zen monasteries.

It's daily doing, in my case, it's buying some food in the store, going to have a cup of coffee, taking the dog for a walk in the forest, listening to the BBC World News, having a glass of wine occasionally with a meal, watching a movie, nothing extraordinary. And so quite an ordinary existence. And so it's hiding in there, the spirituality is in there, it's not away from there, just this.

And so I'm sorry about these words that we use, but language is limited, so we have to use certain words. And perhaps the emotion around these words then eventually is going to go and they become neutral again and you can use them for what they are, which is simply useful pointers no more. Thank you.

Sometimes when I hear you talk about presence, it seems like you're describing a state in which there's no mental or emotional content and yet I experience emotions in presence, perhaps sadness when something happens that is difficult for another person or at the news of the death of someone I love and I experience that emotion happening in present time. Isn't it possible for emotional experiences to arise in presence? Yes, you can have presence while the emotions are happening or even while thoughts are happening.

It means you're not totally lost in, totally identified with, totally drawn into the emotion or the thought. There is in the background a space of awareness that in the foreground there may be anger, sadness, and you're not totally lost in it. There's a space for it that you still sense and you are essentially not the emotion.

You're the awareness behind the emotion. You know that this emotion is there. The same thing can happen when the mind is active.

You can talk and the mind can completely take over and you become lost in your mind in a stream, either a stream of thinking or a stream of speaking. You can observe it. If you can't yet observe the mind stream in yourself, you can occasionally just quietly observe people talking to each other and especially people who are having a discussion because when you're having a usually discussion or disagreeing about something, there is not only the mind, there's also an emotion that goes with the mind stream.

That's the disagreement. Why is there an emotion when people are having a discussion and they disagree? Why is there an emotion that goes with their mental positions?

Well, because they're identified with a mental position. That identify means their sense of self has become one with the thought. The consciousness, the I, has identified with the form rather than realizing that it is formless in essence.

It has lost that knowledge. So consciousness is in a dreamlike state, I could say. Consciousness identifies with I, with the form, and so there is a self-identification with a mental position or thought which means anybody who questions or doubts or contradicts this mental position or thought is unconsciously regarded by the self-identified thought structure which you have become.

The ego is part of ego. Anybody who disagrees, contradicts, doubts, is unconsciously, not in so many words, but unconsciously regarded as an enemy because you are threatening, it's a delusion, but there's an unconscious belief that the other person is threatening my very being because the person is threatening my mental position with which I have identified. So you can, it's a very deeply unconscious process and it requires quite an alertness to see it in the moment that it happens in yourself.

But perhaps next time somebody comes to you and you're having a kind of disagreement about something and suddenly you can feel an influx as you defend your position or contradict the other person or justify something, feel the emotion that flows into what you say. It will be some kind of either aggressive or defensive emotion that goes with it, either some fear or some aggression. If you can be aware of that at that moment and realize what is happening that you have identified with something in your mind believing that that is you, believing your very existence is threatened by somebody contradicting you, it's unconscious.

That's why people get aggressive and negative energy flows the moment somebody contradicts you. It just means somebody has a different opinion, but the ego can't allow a different opinion because the ego feels its existence is threatened by a different opinion because ego's identification with thought and a mental position. This is on a personal level, this can become an entire war between nations, the similar pattern.

So you can, at first you can see it, let's say you're observing two people having a discussion and of course, let's say you are not involved, then it's easier for you to see that process at work and realize that usually both of them become drawn into a very negative confrontation simply because they hold different opinions, but for them, it's more than an opinion, it's their very self that's threatened.

It's an illusion, but that's how it is perceived. So it's very fundamental and very basic to the huge amount of conflict that arises in human interactions. And it's basically so simple that it's just quite incomprehensible that people haven't realized by now that this is how it works.

And so, but the pattern is so deep seated that even people who are engaged in spiritual work for years still get drawn into that when their mental position is threatened. No matter how much spirituality, whoom, there they are, defending their very existence. Because the pattern is very deep.

So alertness is required. If you don't want to carry on in that way for the rest of your life and be part of that, madness ultimately, dysfunction ultimately because it creates continuous conflict and negative feelings and so on and interferes with the true relationship with another human being. Be aware in yourself of this process when and as it happens.

And for that, you have to wait until the moment comes when somebody contradicts you or says, no, you're not right, or I don't agree or whatever they say. And then you have to be alert. What is it that comes up and wants to defeat the other or protect itself?

So that is a very vital thing, but presence is required. The pattern is deep, very deep seated. Without the presence, each time, every time it will take you over and you'll be lost.

So alertness. I can't remember what the question was, but this is vital. Ah, yes.

Sometimes when I hear you talk about presence, it seems like you're describing a state in which there's no mental or emotional content and yet I experience emotions in presence. So we've been talking now just about experiencing the absence of presence and there's a mental, emotional stream that comes up. You can do it to yourself also.

You can have a discussion with yourself. You can doubt yourself. You can have an argument with yourself.

You can have one part of your mind accusing another part of your mind of being lazy, for example, or of being not good enough. And then you have to have a similar argument with one part of you. The mind splits itself in two and says, you should know better by now.

You should do better. Why did you do this? Well, I just couldn't help it.

No presence. So yes, there can be presence when there are thoughts and emotions. And it is vital that there should be presence in the background, which means just you're aware that certain emotions are coming through you and you're not the emotion, but you're the awareness.

You're aware that certain thoughts are there. You're aware that you have an opinion. You're aware that you're voicing your opinion.

That's fine, but you are not in the opinion. Your sense of self isn't in the opinion. Your sense of self is the awareness.

And then you can express an opinion and you can say, the universe is in essence consciousness. And then the other person says, that's a load of rubbish or whatever they say, mumbo jumbo. You are talking mumbo jumbo.

Where's the, show me the consciousness or whatever the flat footed materialist is saying to you. And then observe, see whether you actually know that you, the universe, which means you ultimately comes down to you as this is where you experience the universe as yourself. Do you know that the universe is consciousness or do you just believe that the universe at that moment are you the consciousness or are you the belief that you are conscious?

If you are the belief and you are the thought and then you'll be defending yourself. So you'll be shouting back at the other person that they are narrow minded bigots. Or there is an awareness in the background and then you say the universe is consciousness and the other person says, that's a load of rubbish.

Then you say, well, I'm sure in your perception that the universe is not consciousness and that's fine. Why should you believe that if that's not within your reality, fine, you're entitled to believing that the universe is a soup of chemicals. That's fine, that's your reality.

It's perfectly, I'm perfectly comfortable to allow you your reality of living in a soup of chemicals or whatever atoms floating around, whatever it is or the gray matter of the brain producing the illusion of consciousness or whatever, it's fine. No defensiveness anymore and no negative feelings. This is why I liked the, when Obama said you don't need to be disagreeable to disagree, you don't need to become disagreeable when you disagree.

The deeper implication is you're not identified with your mental position. And he couldn't say that because nobody would understand what he's talking about. So, well, only some people would understand.

There's awareness in the background. So presence or awareness is there while things happen in the foreground. The foreground can be your thoughts.

The foreground can be your emotions. The foreground can be whatever is happening around you. And so the perceptions of whatever is happening outside, there's also, you're not perceiving this through the screen of concepts or thoughts.

You're perceiving through the, you are the awareness, not the thoughts. And even if a thought comes and says, that person looks weird, then you just have, you realize it's just a thought in your head. And when you're finally communicating with that person, you can still be the awareness and communicate as awareness rather than communicate as if the thought, this person is weird, were the reality.

You realize it's just a thought that came into the head and you don't impose the thought on the person and then relate to that person as if it were true. And you say, and then suddenly you're talking to this weird person. What are you going to, everything, it'll distort everything.

Or you want something, but the thought says, this person could be helpful to me or whatever the ego says. That's a thought, be there as the spacious presence. Now the question is, yes, of course there can be presence while thoughts happen or emotions happen, including sadness or anger.

But the questioner asks, it seems like you're describing a state in which there's no mental or emotional content. There's also the possibility of presence becoming so intensified at times that all thoughts and emotions become obliterated. This is very different from suppressing emotions or thoughts.

It's simply that the presence that arises becomes so intense that they're just thoughts or emotions don't arise. And usually it could happen in a limit situation as existentialist philosophers call it, when you're in a life or death situation, it could happen that presence sometimes can become so intense or it can become, for no reason at all, it can happen. And you're simply sitting in your room and suddenly there's no thought whatsoever.

There's no emotion, there's just an intense aliveness. It's not you haven't deadened yourself because that is sometimes people believe if you have no emotion, you're dead. You haven't deadened yourself, there's an intense aliveness, a different kind of aliveness than the emotion, a vibrantly alive field of intense consciousness.

So that can arise sometimes and it's beautiful. I sometimes spend periods of time without thought and without emotion and it's beautiful. Nature, walking around nature or with nothing particular to think about, why think?

Or sitting in a cafe, drinking a cup of coffee, why think? Be, just be the alert presence. So

you have the presence can be there without thought and emotion at times that will happen or presence can be there as a background to whatever emotions or thoughts are there.

So, and presence can be lost completely in which case all you have is thoughts and emotions and you will believe that you are the thought and the emotion, that's the unconscious state. So for us, it's important to be there as the emotions happen and I suggest you work particularly with people, talking to people, exchange of opinions and viewpoints, observing aggression, observing defensiveness, observing negativity flowing into just because somebody has not the same opinion that you have. And then don't condemn yourself and say, oh, I shouldn't have, I shouldn't be feeling this.

No, just again, observe that, observe that. Suddenly you've become angry with this person and instead of saying, oh dear, that's, I failed miserably in my spiritual practice. No, just say, okay, I just, just noticing that.

You're no longer in it, you're already out of it when you notice it. So be compassionate with yourself. It's just, but the important thing is you're aware.

So we all know the famous joke about the person when you tell the person, why are you so angry? The person says, I am not angry. And that's of course a typical example of somebody who doesn't know, has absolutely no awareness.

In the middle of anger denies that there's anger.

[Speaker 2] (3:00:16 - 3:04:45)

You can have a moment of silence, which is, I recommend that you bring space for that into your life, is to have that silence, just to sit silently, to return home within yourself. And love is space, find that space and let the love flow through. If you're full of thoughts and ideas and expectations and imagination of what your relationship should be like, there's no space, not only externally between the other and yourself, but there's no space internally.

I like to use this analogy and I've often used it of a bamboo flute. And if you can imagine, use the image of the flute. And yes, so there's the form, just as we have a form.

But the most important aspect of the flute is the whole, is the whole in the flute, in which then life's breath, when life wants to create music, it blows into this beautiful form. And without that whole, it couldn't create the music, so it creates beautiful music. But if we, so here we have the form, ourselves, our minds.

Every thought that we have, every idea, expectation, opinion, judgment, that we identify with. And we say that every thought and idea, et cetera, is a being and we begin to fill with every thought, every identification that we have as this being into the flute hole.

And then life, which wants to create this beautiful music through us, we blow into the flute and we go, and there's absolutely no sound that come out, no music that can be created through this, because the hole is filled with beings.

Oh, this is where I say that most of us human beings are full of beings. And our spiritual journey is our spiritual awakening. The process is to empty out the beings.

All our identifications, so empty out the hole that you are, the emptiness that you are, because you're a nothingness, even physicists have proved we're 99% empty space. And it's only the idea that we hold so solidly and believe in, and then we defend, which creates conflict, not only internally, but a conflict with others in our relationships, between different so-called cultures, because we're full of beings. So our job is to be empty, be the hole in the flute, in which life's breath breathes through.

That's from, is it Rumi? No, not Rumi, which? Hafiz, of course.

Yeah, thank you.

[Speaker 1] (3:04:59 - 4:25:59)

So as we sit here, I'd like to put a little question mark into your mind. And I'd like you to ask yourself whether at this moment you're thinking. So you will know the answer.

And try it again. I'll stop speaking for a few seconds. And just be alert inside yourself to find out whether you're thinking, because usually you don't even know that you're thinking.

You're just, you are the thinking. So there's no outside thing that knows that you are thinking. You are just the thinking, you become the thinking, the thinker, and the thinker is the person.

And to step out of the person, you have to experience that there is a dimension in you where the person is not, but something deeper is there. That's what we want to explore. So again, a moment of stillness.

In the power of now, I talk about a mouse, sorry, a cat watching a mouse hole. Now, if you've ever watched a cat watching a mouse hole, then you will have noticed that the cat could spend a long time there, being extremely alert and just watching in the same way that my dog watches a treat when I put it down and say, not yet. And then the dog goes.

And so the cat watches the mouse hole, is in a state of complete attention. So one spiritual master, I believe it was a Sufi master, said his teacher had been a cat. When he was asked who had been his spiritual teacher, he said, a cat, how is that?

And he said, I watched a cat watching a mouse hole. And by watching a cat watching a

mouse hole, I realized, I awakened. Because by watching a cat, he entered a state of alert attention in which there's no thinking, like now.

Just that. There's no, so just a short moment, but it's not matter how long. It's a wonderful thing to realize that you can not think.

It's a wonderful thing to realize that you are still there when you're not thinking. As Oprah said, when we started for the first time with a moment of silence, and we started to talk again, she said, okay, I'm still here. I just checked in.

I'm still alive. I'm still here. I haven't disappeared.

One more time. Be alert. You need to be alert to know whether you're thinking or not.

So there's an alertness, like a cat, and there may be thinking or there may not be thinking. There may just be the alertness. I also mentioned in *The Power of Now* that another question you can ask yourself is, what's my next thought going to be?

I'm going to just watch out, see what the next thought is that's going to come into my mind. If you're very alert, it'll be quite a while before the next thought comes, but the moment the degree of alertness decreases, thoughts come flooding back in. Interesting experiments you can do with yourself and your mind.

Now, from the point of view of the usual thinking mind, the realization that there is a dimension in you where thinking either does not happen at all or becomes unimportant. To the thinking mind, that is either a threat or completely uninteresting because what could be less interesting than not thinking? So from the point of view of the thinking mind, the state of consciousness in which there is no thinking is either a threat, oh, I don't want to go there, I'm going to disappear.

But of course, Oprah didn't disappear after the stillness. I'm still there, I'm still alive. And then when she said that, I said, perhaps you're even more alive now.

And that is pointing to something. There is an intensification of aliveness when you begin to enter that, let's call it, dimension in yourself. The dimension in which compulsive thinking doesn't operate anymore.

But you have to be careful because you could easily, because it's, okay, what we're doing here is we rise above thinking. We become so alert that thinking either doesn't happen or is seen as unimportant. From there, you can easily suddenly drop, ooh, through thinking to below thought.

In other words, you go to hot sleep. So when you stop thinking, there's the alertness. Here's the thinking level.

That's the normal level for most human beings while they are awake and even when

they dream, they're still going on. Here's the thinking level. Underneath the thinking level, there's consciousness.

Above the thinking level, there's consciousness. And even within thinking, there's consciousness. Thinking is an expression of consciousness, but there are infinite varieties of manifestations or expressions of consciousness.

This flower is an expression of consciousness taking on the form, this beautiful form, incredible beauty. Consciousness being born into forms. And consciousness, not all consciousness is form.

There is a dimension of consciousness that is formless out of which all forms come, the ground of all being. And that's what we are exploring here. Thinking, you rise above thinking or you fall below thinking.

My dog is below thinking. Now, that doesn't mean that the dog is stupid. The dog has its own intelligence.

And in some ways, the dog is superior to humans, in some ways. For example, it's more joyful than most humans, has more fun than most humans, lives more intensely in the present moment where life is than most humans, doesn't worry like most humans do, and is loving towards all beings. Some dogs are loving only towards certain beings, but our dog is loving towards all beings.

But the dog doesn't think. The dog is conscious, but there's no conceptual thinking. I'm sure the dog doesn't have thoughts.

The other day, the dog was in the bedroom in her little house. Quite late, it was already night. The dog was already sleeping.

And I was still doing things near the door, the entrance door to the apartment. I was opening the sliding door and looking for something in my coat. And when the dog heard the sliding door near the exit, she came out, she must have woken up and heard a noise, came out running to see what I was doing, whether I was getting my coat to go out.

So she came running. And then for 10 seconds, the dog stood there looking at me and realized I was just taking something out of a pocket and I wasn't going out. So after five seconds, the dog must have realized I wasn't going out and went straight back into her house and back to sleep.

Now, did the dog begin to think in her house, oh, I can hear some, he's opening the sliding door to the wardrobe, I wonder if he's getting the coat out to go out and then I need to have a look because he may leave me alone here. Okay, I'm going to have a look to see what's happening. And then the dog would go and look, oh, what's he doing there?

Oh, I think he's just taking something out of his pocket, he's not going out after all, why did I bother to come out? I might as well go back to sleep. Now, I'm sure that's not how it happened, but that's what would have happened for a human doing that.

Now, the strange thing, how would that happen for a dog? All the whole thing must have happened without conceptualization. There was the listening to the noise and there was a sudden knowing that that could be, that noise of the door could mean that I'm going out.

And then there was just getting up, running out without, I'm sure, although you can't really get into the dog's mind, I've tried, I'm sure it was without any decision-making process or mental commentary. There was just an immediately response to a situation and then there was a recognition of what was going on in that situation and immediately not a decision to go back to bed, but just going back to bed. So there was consciousness there at work, but not through conceptualization.

And for humans, of course, it would be usually different. There would be, as you're doing that, there would be the running commentary that I just mentioned if the dog had a human mind. There are some anthropologists who have looked at the history of the human race and they wondered where or how did thinking start?

When did humans begin to think? And it seems likely that at first there was no conceptual thinking. There was only thinking in images.

So when they closed their eyes, they could suddenly see certain images of things that had happened or things that they imagined. So the moment they closed their eyes, certain images would be there and when they opened their eyes, they still lived very much like the dog, just an immediate response without the interference of conceptualization. And then thinking started.

And there's one anthropologist who has put forward the theory. He has some evidence for it. I forgot what the evidence is, but his theory is very controversial.

I believe, however, that he may be right. He believed that at first, when thinking began to happen in humans and thinking in the sense of words in your mind, those humans at first thought that some entity, a god or a spirit, was talking to them. And so the voice of the god or spirit that suddenly appeared in their head said, oh, you better go to the lake and make sure that you catch another fish.

And they would go, oh, why is there no fish today? Somebody's talking. Why don't you go there?

There might be a better catch there. Okay, thank you. I got a message.

I should be going there. It was their own thoughts, but for a long time, because it was

something new, they didn't realize that these were their thoughts. They believed some spirit helper, something was telling them to do something.

And then, of course, sometimes it might also be the same kind of voice that is telling these days the terrorists to go and shoot people. You must shoot these evil people and go do it. Oh, okay, I'll do it.

No idea that they are obeying something that is in their own mind. And so that's how it all started. And then thousands of years passed, and now we have human beings who are completely identified with mind.

And their whole sense of self is derived from mind, from mind activity. And the awakening of consciousness is the realization that beyond your mind, there is a great depth to who you are and great freedom and a far greater intelligence than is in your thinking mind. Then the thinking mind can be used by that greater intelligence.

But for the thinking mind to be used by the greater intelligence, it means you have to find within yourself that greater intelligence, which we could call unconditioned consciousness. You have to find that in yourself. If we don't find it, we are going to kill ourselves because this evolutionary level where we are identified with thinking is no longer functioning well.

It has become destructive. It has reached the end of its lifespan or usefulness. And so if humans don't achieve the transition, they will either regress to an earlier stage of development and then have another go, which could take a few hundred thousand years, but the universe is patient.

Or the species becomes extinct and then consciousness simply decides to move through other channels to express itself. It could be another life form very easily. Consciousness does not mind through which channel it comes into this world, but it wants to come into this world.

I don't know why, but I know that consciousness wants to be born fully into this world from another realm, from the untimeless, unmanifested, where consciousness does not evolve. It's already full and complete because it's timeless. But from the timeless realm, for consciousness, you can use other words if you want.

The Tao, God, transcendental reality, it doesn't matter, it just works. That which we cannot name, it wants to come through the forms into this world and somehow do something here. Perhaps it wants to dissolve this world, to outshine this world, to transform it, to spiritualize matter, transformation of the entire universe.

But I know what our task is to wake up here out of being trapped in your own little mind, the little mind, it's not yours, it's just the human mind. And that's why I started today by asking you to see if you can have a little space inside yourself where you're actually not

thinking, but still awake and alert. That's the opening into the greater intelligence.

At first, it seems there's nothing happening. No, don't expect anything to happen, that will come. It's the beginning, you open the door.

You're opening the door to another dimension. Now, the thinking mind knows nothing of it and you cannot use it to enter that dimension. The moment you use it and try to figure something out, what's in there, you're out again, you're not in that dimension anymore.

We are opening the door to another dimension of consciousness within ourselves. And then see if the door can stay open while we go about our daily business, or if it can be open occasionally as we go about our daily business. And from the point of view of the mind, it's not interesting because there's nothing, to the mind, it's nothing.

And that's fine, to the mind, it's not interesting. And of course it isn't, because when you're not thinking for a moment, nobody could possibly call that interesting. It's deeper than interesting.

But at first it might appear, well, there's nothing there, there's nothing happening. But you have to persist and see, wait a little, and see if you can enter that dimension more fully. Just you open the door and first of all, you experience not so much a positive thing, but an increasing absence of negative things, all the negative things that are continuously produced by the thinking mind, by unnecessary thinking.

So as you bring that dimension into your life, you experience an increasing absence of the negativity that is normal when you're totally trapped in your mind, all the negative thoughts that go through your head and that emotions then respond to. So our destiny is to shift from thought into the realm of no thought, and then being able to use thought from there. In fact, who or what is it that then uses thought?

The intelligence that is the realm of no thought then uses your mind. And then you become productive in this world. You contribute something truly new to this world in whatever form, whether you're an artist or a writer, or you work with people, or you are engaged in some organization.

You then make a very different contribution because it's no longer ego-based. Ego is the unobserved mind, the mind without awareness that you mistake for who you are, me, the person. And it's a dreadful thing to live your entire life never going beyond the personal dimension, never seeing the transcendent dimension in yourself and in the world.

So it's essential then to no longer be trapped continuously in thought. And don't expect results from the dimension of no thought. It could be a while before there's any tangible result on an external level.

In other words, that you suddenly write a masterpiece or you suddenly become a great performer, or suddenly you help thousands of people with this or that and become a beneficial influence in this world. It could take a while, and we don't know what form it'll take. It may not happen immediately that as you begin to enter that dimension occasionally, and then the mind says, you see, nothing is happening.

I've been practicing being free of thinking for a few months now, and my life hasn't changed at all. It's still the same. In fact, it's become less interesting because I worry less.

Of course, worry makes your life very interesting, and it gives you the impression that your life is so important. My life is so important that I'm worrying all the time, and these are very important things I need to worry about. And so then from the point of view of the mind, your life has become less important.

So, okay, I've been doing it for several months. That's enough. I'm going back to my old ways.

And sometimes people write to me and say, okay, I've been practicing awareness, presence for a year now, and where do I go from here? There were years when I lived mainly in the state of awareness without any, many tangible results. Occasionally I would help people.

That was very nice. I enjoyed that. Help would, not I would help, but help would come through that opening.

But beyond that, there wasn't much happening. That went on for years, and occasionally I thought, well, there is more that could happen, but it's not happening yet, but that's fine. And in the meantime, there was a, I realized retrospectively, there was a, whatever words we use are not quite right, but let's just put it like this.

There was a buildup gradually of energy, of presence power, one could say. There was an intensification of that in the background of my life that had no visible manifestation really in the external, not very much. And so that presence was there, and one day, in fact, I gave a little, it came to me to say, please, I can do more.

I said to myself, accelerate, please, accelerate, acceleration. I was talking to myself, because you're always just talking to yourself. And then a little bit later, it happened, and then the energy stream came, that became a book, and so on, and an intensification of what I was doing already on a very small scale, but suddenly there was a whoosh coming into this world.

But for years, there was just empty space mostly inside, walking around and just very pleasant, enjoying the beauty of every moment, of the trees and of the animals. And something was there in the background, and then finally it came whoosh into this world.

And perhaps when it's, it may well be that after a while, the energy stream that goes out may subside again, and I just go back into just the space.

In some way, I do that continuously, because after a talk, you go back into whoosh. So there's the coming out of the consciousness stream, going into words and into energy that flows out, whoosh, and then return into just stillness, space. No need to think very much, unless there's something to think about.

Where am I going for dinner? Where do I have enough? But even there, you can, it's amazing how many things you can do without unnecessary thinking, and just experiment.

I recommend that you experiment in your daily life. This is the most beautiful spiritual practice. Experiment whether you can do many little things without the interference of thinking, with just presence or awareness there.

Because what I mean by that is you are conscious that you're doing something, but you're not thinking about it. And whether you can actually even register things without formulating words in your mind. If you have little things, little experiments, it's all very fascinating.

You can have a little clock. If you have a watch or a clock that doesn't have, especially if it doesn't have digitals on it, you can experiment with yourself and see whether you can look at a clock or a watch and know what time it is without in your mind telling yourself what time it is. And that's quite a strange thing.

There is a knowing without conceptualization then. If you know that it is a certain time, whatever it is, without saying to yourself that time it is. You don't do it with a digital clock because when you read the numbers, it's almost impossible not to say the numbers in your mind.

Just one little experiment. And then many other things when you're doing a certain task, every master, the moment you become a master, you don't think anymore. Intuition takes over.

Otherwise you can't be a master. Now, sometimes you have to learn first gradually through the mind to do something. There may be certain steps that you need to learn, whether you're building something or whatever it is that you do, learning to play the piano or whatever it is.

At first, it's driving a car, whatever. At first, it takes effort to learn, to become an artist, a painter. You learn the techniques and so on.

And then a moment comes when all that is not helpful anymore. If you never go beyond the techniques, you won't be a great artist. The great artist knows the techniques and

then steps beyond it and then something else takes over.

And that's where your life becomes empowered. But you need to open the door to the empowerment. And it's not, you cannot get there through thinking.

And even something that seems to be an intellectual thing, like writing a book, if there's any inspiration or power in the book, whether it's fiction or nonfiction, it has to come from the place, the empty space inside you that you go into where for a moment you close your eyes and then you look again and nothing comes. You go back and you look again until something comes through spontaneously. But it won't come spontaneously.

You have to have learned, you need to learn to write first before you, I mean, before you can write a book, you need to be able to write. Or if you want to become a great tennis player, you cannot go into the state of no thought very deeply and suddenly step on the tennis court and take a rack and become, be immediately a great tennis player. There's a, you have to go through many steps first before the intuition can take over.

But that's where the dividing line is between somebody who has learned to do something well, and many people do that, and somebody who brings in something new or goes beyond doing something technically well where inspiration comes in, where empowerment comes in. So it's vital to find that dimension in yourself. So go around your daily life, see how much you can actually do without the interference of conceptualization.

It's amazing, and observe yourself. Is it possible for you to be, for a moment, free of thinking at any given time? For example, now, no thought, just presence.

You haven't disappeared, but what can you, what is there to add to this moment by thinking about something? Nothing. Why do you, you don't need to add anything.

And what is there then when you're not thinking? What's there left of you, what you had called you? There is definitely something there.

No past, let's say, because to have a past, you need to think about your past. To have a future, you need to think about your future. Now, if you're not thinking about your past and your future, you don't have a past and a future.

There's only nowness. There's only this moment. So you have, let's say, you have no past, you have no future, there's only this moment now, and there's nothing to think about.

There's still something there, and that's the essence of who you are, consciousness itself. It cannot be defined. It's neither big nor small, nor fat nor thin, nor old nor young, timeless essence, has no form.

There's nothing much you can say about it, but there's definitely a strong sense of beingness or aliveness that's left when you take that, the rest away. And that's what you take thought away. You haven't disappeared.

In fact, thought wasn't at all who you are. You thought so, but it wasn't. If you take thought away, you can actually, you touch the essence.

You know the essence. And when I say you know the essence, that's not absolutely correct because the moment we use words, we create duality. You know yourself as the essence.

You don't know it like a subject and object knowing. I know this, in this world, that's through thought. There's always the knowing subject and that which is known.

But here, the knower and the known are one. You know yourself to be consciousness. It's not separate.

There isn't a me that says, I am consciousness. There's consciousness. You know yourself as consciousness.

I am that. No separation, no division anymore. And when I put it into words, it sounds almost complicated because we cannot really verbalize because it's too simple.

It's not a differentiated state. Everything out here is differentiated. This is undifferentiated state of pure intelligence or pure consciousness.

It's always there to be easy to just touch it in you. It's always underneath the mental noise in everyone. It's there for you, waiting for you, almost one could say.

It's waiting and it wants to come through you. Just open, open, and it comes through. It doesn't matter if you are a saint or a sinner.

You open, there's a space between two thoughts and it comes through. What you did in the past is irrelevant, whether you accumulated many spiritual credits by spending 20 years in a monastery or whether you are stuck in a prison and the opening happens, spirit doesn't ask, well, are you qualified for me to come through? It will come through wherever there is an opening.

So your personal past doesn't have that much to do with it. The only thing is it got you here to this moment where you realize the possibility of living in a different state of consciousness. Your past got you here.

Well, that's good enough. Whether your past was a successful past or failure past, whether you built up great things already in your life or whether you messed your life up completely becomes irrelevant. So you become free from the past through this because another dimension comes in.

This is why it has happened to some people who were criminals. And at some point, suddenly all that subsided. And a space opened up inside them.

The unhappy self suddenly wasn't operating anymore. Now, to some people, it comes as a spiritual experience, which means it comes and then after a while, they say, oh God, it's gone, I lost it. Okay, that's the normal thing.

Sometimes it comes once and stays forever. You never lose the connection again with the open space. But for many people, first it comes and then it leaves them.

And they don't realize that they can actually welcome it and encourage it. You don't have to wait for it to come again at some point. Why don't you ask for it to come back?

I'm not saying you ask like, please come back. No, you ask for it to come back by simply walking across the room without thought. Just see if I can walk across the room without needing to be already where I want to get to the door, just be present in every step.

Can you be present in each step as you walk across the room? Chup, chup, chup. Oh, you're not thinking, you're just present with that.

Can I be present while I look out of the window to check the weather? And can I know what the weather is like without saying something to myself or having some kind of relationship or attitude towards the weather? Can I open the curtains in the morning and say nothing, just look and know?

There's either sunshine or there's rain or whatever it is. You open the window and there is an awareness that's looking through your eyes. And do you have to say something to yourself then?

Do you have to say, oh, it's another dreary day. I can't take any more of this. Do you have to say that or is it just an old habit that you've slipped into?

Do you have to say, oh, I hope it stays like that today or I hope it doesn't or whatever, it's going to be too hot or whatever comment you have, do you need to comment or can you look out of the window and just know and be the knowing without conceptualization and without like or dislike, just allow it to be and know. In the same way you would, I suggested you can look at your watch and know what time it is without saying to yourself what time it is. So you look out of the window and for a moment there is a space, you are the space through which the perception happens.

You are not a person. Don't worry, the person is still there on some level. So you're not going to be spaced out for the rest of your life and then walk around.

I don't know where I am anymore. That doesn't happen. But it's a wonderful thing if you realize that you can actually be there as the conscious space for whatever you are

looking at, even at this moment.

You're looking at this person and this person is looking at you. Can you be the conscious space for the perception, for the looking, rather than be a person that always has some kind of thing to say like, what's he talking about? It's a thought.

I don't understand. It's a thought. Can you explain more?

I don't get it. Don't believe that thought. The thought says I don't get it and of course on the level of thought you don't get it, but on another level you get it.

You get it by being it. And so can you be in your car at the traffic light and just be there as the space for the perception of the red light? It's peaceful.

Suddenly the traffic light becomes peaceful. You are there as you're just seeing. There's the seeing and there is the space.

Why comment on the red light or think about something that's going to happen or might happen or happened in the past or something. Just be, perceive and be the space. And then the strange thing is that which you perceive is more alive and even the traffic light, the red light has a beauty to it.

It sounds very strange and normally it's only sometimes people who take acid talk about weird things like when I saw the traffic light, I went, wow. Now you don't need to take acid for that and it may not be a wow, but it may be wow, that has its own beauty and aliveness, that color. And you're not saying it, you just know it.

And so if you can see the traffic light like that, even more so, that will be the case even more so if you look at the tree that's right next to the traffic light, it has a presence, it has a beauty, it has an aliveness beyond the concept of tree or the birds that just landed on a branch, an aliveness, a beingness that you then recognize from your own beingness and aliveness that before was obscured by mental noise. So unless you become like little children because this is something to do with how little children perceive the world before they conceptualize. Unless you become like little children, you cannot enter the kingdom of heaven.

Oh, so that's what it is. But it's even deeper state than the child state because the child still has to go through the thinking stage and then come out of it. The child has certain things still in common with a dog, not quite, but still no conceptualization, just wonder.

And so that's a gradual practice of choosing to step out of the conceptualizing mind whenever it is unnecessary, which is about, depending on your life activity, 80% of the time, you don't need to think a lot. You could think thoughts may come and go, but you don't, there's no need to continuously think. It's become familiar with spaciousness and then think when it's necessary.

And you be empowered then in your thinking becomes actually empowered. You can actually, if you wanted to create something in this world, this is what some popular books talk about, manifesting your external reality. Of course you can through applying focused thinking, you can manifest, but if you're in touch with the spaciousness, the unconditioned consciousness inside, then that comes through and will manifest through you.

And then it comes as a sudden knowing that this is what I want to do, but the I that wants to do it, it's not the ego I, it is the deeper I. So you become aligned with what the universe wants. It's not just the little me wants.

That's the beauty of that. So you can then, you as the greater consciousness can manifest if you want to. Don't fall into the trap of believing that something that you manifest is going to bring you fulfillment.

It's only on the external level, the fulfillment needs to be there already now. Fulfillment is being in touch with that dimension in yourself before anything happens. That's where fulfillment lies.

The rest is the divine play of form, but the divine wants to play out there. It wants the manifestation. It wants two things.

There are two movements in the universe. One is the movement into differentiation and into form and into birth, into bodies, into thinking. The universe started from a point of nothingness.

That nothingness became one, let's just, it's all not quite right because we can't really talk about it. Out of the nothingness came the ball, whatever, before the big bang happened. There was just one point of potentiality for the entire universe.

Then at some point, the explosion, if we could call it that, out of that was the beginning of the process of differentiation into increasing number of different forms. And we are still part of that explosion into greater and greater differentiation. But at the same time, there is, this is a pull, the outward pull.

Then there's the inward pull back to the source, to the timeless source out of which it all came. And so we as human beings are at a transitional stage where we are becoming strongly aware of the pull back to the source. So there are two movements in the universe.

One is out into more and more form and more and more thinking. It's still there, that movement. There's still many people who believe that the problems of this world can be solved if we just think harder about them, have more committee meetings about the problems of the world and discuss them.

And eventually they can be solved. They don't realize that the problems of the world are there because we have lost touch with the source out of which everything came. So by going into further differentiation, we cannot solve the problems.

We'll actually increase them. So we need to balance now, return to the source and going out into the world. It doesn't mean we don't do anything anymore.

We can still create and do, but not lose ourselves in creating and doing and thinking. Lose ourselves in the mind. Connected with the timeless, formless source of all life within, a space of no thought, connected with that.

Then we can create, not we as persons, but we as a universal movement of consciousness. Consciousness wants us to be co-creators of the universe, of form. So we can be that, but only if we are connected.

We need conscious connection with the source. So that's the destiny. That's your life purpose.

That's why we are here. And if it sounds complicated to your mind, it's only to the mind. It's not complicated at all.

It's actually very, very simple. It's so simple that you can't even think about it. What is self?

Now I noticed that it's spelled with a capital S. I don't know whether it's a mistake or on purpose. Probably on purpose.

There's one self, that's the illusion, that is the identification with the mind and the ego, which is the unobserved mind. And there's a self that arises there that is a dreadful burden to live with. You carry around, most people for their whole life, they carry the burden of a mentally defined sense of who they are, me.

What about me? That's the little self, the illusory self. And that's the self that most people refer to when they say I.

But I potentially has a deeper meaning and is the deepest word perhaps we could say in the language. In its truest sense, I refers to who you are beyond the form, beyond the thoughts and the emotions. You as the consciousness is the self.

Now the self has no form. You cannot grasp it. You cannot see it.

You cannot really define it. You can never say, ah, there it is. Because who is saying that?

You are the consciousness, the perceiving. You are it. You can never see it as an object external to yourself.

It's the essence. You are not what is seen. You are the seeing.

You are the consciousness behind the seeing. You are not what you hear. You are the consciousness behind what you hear.

So it's never, this is what Jesus said when he used the term the kingdom of heaven or the kingdom of God. He said in one of the gospels, the kingdom of heaven does not come with signs to be observed. You cannot say, ah, here it is, or ah, it's over there.

It's a free translation more or less. That's what he said. And of course, what do Christians do?

They're waiting for the kingdom of heaven to arrive when they've been told you won't be able to see it. You can't say, ah, there it is. It does not come with signs to be observed.

Literally, he said that. And I'm sure that's one of the, there's a lot of things that people later put into his mouth, but that is one of the things, words that were uttered by somebody who knew the reality. It doesn't come with signs to be observed.

You can never see it or grasp it or know it as an object for your knowledge because you essentially are it as the consciousness that perceives, the consciousness behind your thinking, behind your emotions, behind your perceptions, behind your experiences, the very light of the world. Another thing he said, he not only said, Jesus, I am the light of the world. He said also, you are the light of the world.

So he's pointing, what is the light? It's the light of consciousness which illuminates the world. You are that.

That is the self. It has no form. Therefore, it seems that Buddhism and Buddhists and Hindus are in disagreement, but only those who haven't realized the reality behind their teachings.

Those Buddhists and Hindus who have not really realized the reality behind their teachings, they are in disagreement and they have arguments whether there's self or no self. Atman, anatman, the Hindus believe in atman, that the existence of self, the fundamental underlying reality. And the Buddhists say, no, anatman, no self.

And then whenever you see a Hindu and a Buddhist discussing, perhaps even with negative emotions, whether one or the other is true, then you'll know that they haven't experienced, they haven't known the reality behind the teaching because the reality behind the teaching is exactly the same. It's just a different perspective on the same. The Buddhists like to deny, they don't want to call it something as if the moment you call it, you say the self, the danger is that you make it into a mental object and start believing in it.

The Buddhists don't like that, so they say there is no self, which in a way is true also. There's nothing that you could say, there it is. It is an empty space almost, you could say, but it's potential fullness also.

It's full and empty at the same time. It's all the same, the self. That's why the Dalai Lama I saw giving a talk a while ago to Hindus and he said, you believe in Atman and we believe in Anathman, what does it matter?

And he laughed, ah, ah, ah, makes no difference. Ah, ah, ah, ah, ah, ah, ah, ah. That's a good answer.

From Lian, Lian, most spiritual teachers talk about the process of enlightenment or awakening, explaining things as if we are moving towards a goal somewhere in the future. How do you bridge learning the process of living in the now without continuing to feed the idea of it being a goal somewhere in the future? So we talk about learning to live in the now, which implies time, which is not the now.

That's what the question is about. The process of awakening, and does this not lead to the idea that we are moving towards a goal in the future and thereby, of course, missing the now? That could be the case if it's misunderstood.

If the process of awakening or living in the now is misunderstood, then the mind will create an imagined future self that is fully at home in the now. So one day, the mind says, I will achieve the state of being fully in the now, and then I'll be awake. And of course, thereby ensuring that you will never reach it.

And this is a dilemma of many spiritual seekers who have been seeking for many, many years, nobody present, of course, here. They've been seeking for many, many years and not realizing that their mind has created a state to be achieved in the future, and I am aspiring towards that state, and that state is a perfected, more enlightened or awake form of me. And so, of course, you will never reach it because continuously, you have the idea in your mind that there is a state to be reached.

And so you miss continuously the only place where the state can be reached, which is now. So that's the realization then that we need to let go of this idea that awakening is a future state to be achieved, but awakening can only happen in the present moment, and there's no self that you're going to reach that is a perfected version of your present self. But whenever we talk about the timeless dimension of consciousness, of presence, with reference to this dimension, we are going to encounter some kind of paradox.

It is true, of course, that it does take time to learn to live in the now. What that means is that continuously, you're not in the now, and you lose the now, which is access to the timeless dimension of consciousness. You lose access to it, and you're back in your life situation, back in your mind, back in time, where past and future completely obliterate

the present moment, a normal state, in other words, and you become a normal human being again, somewhat mad, which is normal.

So the learning to live in the now, yes, there's a little bit of a paradox here because it takes time to be at home in the now and to live it continuously so that you don't lose the now anymore and go into the dream world of not now. So you bring in the timeless dimension into the dimension of time, and when the two come together, you will encounter, when you put it into words, you'll encounter some form of paradox. That's fine, that's fine.

The important thing is realizing that awakening is not about achieving some future state. The intensity needs to be directed not towards wanting to reach a future because many spiritual seekers have great intensity. They work very hard.

They might meditate four hours a day, and they're really determined to get there, and they never do because their intensity flows into future, into their mind. But the same intensity can be directed into the present moment. So that is bringing together two seemingly conflicting approaches to awakening.

One says there's nothing you can do. Any effort will just take you away from it. And the other approach says you need to want awakening as a drowning man wants air.

Otherwise, you won't get there. So you have the two. Some teachers will tell you there's nothing you can do.

It comes when it comes. Just be here now, enjoy yourself. The other says, oh no, you have to work really hard like the drowning man.

And so you get these conflicting viewpoints. But you can put the two together. But the intensity of the drowning man who wants air, or woman, the intensity of the drowning person who wants air can be directed into the now rather than into some idea of future.

So you become intensely present now. That means you don't need the future anymore. The intensity moves into the vertical dimension rather than losing itself in the horizontal dimension.

So for spiritual seekers, for most spiritual seekers who haven't arrived yet, they may have intensity or others have no intensity at all and they fall asleep in front of the TV waiting for enlightenment to happen. So that doesn't work either. Some intensity is necessary, but not the intensity that moves into the future, but the intensity of presence.

And when a challenge comes into your life, two things can happen. Either the challenge pulls you into old, unconscious, reactive patterns. And you start complaining and resisting and fighting and dreadful things happening.

Or a challenge can awaken you. So for example, let's say your stockbroker sends a statement or your mutual fund sends a statement, you open it and you see your investments have become reduced in value by 65%. You can become unhappy and make up stories in your mind about how difficult your life has now become and how difficult your life is going to be the next few years and how futile it has been to work so hard and to try and save all that money as a security for the future and it's all evaporating into nothingness and how dreadful it all is and think about it and talk to others about it and feel the corresponding emotions arising in your body.

In other words, the challenge has pulled you into unconsciousness, completely lost the now, completely lost the aliveness of now. Or the challenge can awaken you and you see, oh, you see the figure on the page, oh, that's what it is. And you accept this moment as it is without building stories around it and become intensely present.

So the intensity of, you need to have intensity when a challenge comes or a challenging person, a very unconscious person trying to drag you into some kind of conflict. Very easy to succumb to that. It happens in politics all the time.

One unconscious terrorist pulls the whole administration into unconsciousness. We may talk about that. So use a challenge to wake you up into that alertness that is so different from the normal state of reactive thinking, absolutely alert in the now.

Whenever the mind comes in and creates some form of unhappiness for yourself, because that's how unhappiness is created. Unhappiness is not created from the situation. It's created from what your mind is telling you about the situation.

So if you can observe that process in yourself, it's not the situation, situation is neutral. The mental commentary about your situation, life situation, whatever situation you encounter, the mental commentary is what produces the feeling of unhappiness. The mind judges the situation as not good, not good enough or is threatened by it or imagines a future that's not going to be satisfactory and so on.

So it's not the situation, but the mental commentary that creates that unhappiness that is so normal for most people and they don't realize it because they confuse what their mind is saying about a situation with the actual situation. It starts with the simplest thing like saying it's a dreadful day today because there are drops of water coming from the sky and it's gray. The sky is gray and it's a dreadful day.

You've already confused the simplicity of what is with your judgment of what is. So you call the day dreadful. And that's a tiny thing to do, but and then of course it flows into almost everything.

And so you cannot see that everything's, the simple isness of the present moment always the moment is as it is. The rest you add to it. And to see that the moment always

is as it is, there's great power in that, that you don't need to have some kind of reactive relationship with what is.

That's superfluous, it's dysfunctional. And that's so, this is what every master, every Zen master teaches that simplicity of being with what is. People try to study Zen and they go to monasteries and can't figure it out even after 20 years.

Why? Because it's too simple. What is now is, that's Zen.

Be completely with what is and you're immediately a Zen master. If you want to be a Zen master, it's a good profession, then just decide that I'll just be with what is every moment. You got it.

You're there, you don't need time anymore. No time is needed to be with what is. So here we have the paradox.

Now, of course, in this dimension of time, it's very rare that somebody enters that state and never leaves it again. So you might decide as you sit here, okay, I'm going to be a Zen master. From now on, I'm going to be with what is totally.

And I'm not going to add superfluous mind stuff to what is. I'll be with what is and I'll respond to what is out of presence, out of that alert presence and it'll be wonderful. No more problems for the rest of my life.

Of course, it's true. And so you walk out of here or wherever you are and then probably before you reach home, a minor challenge will present itself if only in the form of, it's still raining. It's been raining for days.

Why am I living in this climate? But, ooh, you're beginning to lose it. The master is no longer a master.

Because once you start with that little thought, another one comes about my life. Maybe this thing about the present isn't really working. And so you go, oh, I lost it.

I thought I was going to be a Zen master. I have to think of something else. And so you need time.

You need time because you lost it and then you need time to learn to live in such a way because you continuously lose it. Old patterns, mind patterns come up and take you over again. Habitual mind patterns come up and pull you wherever they want to go.

Now, if you had absolute intensity of presence, and it's possible, it is possible that someone who listens to this, perhaps you or you or you, you're okay, are going to remain present. So with such intensity that the old patterns just cannot take you over anymore. Then all you can feel is the old patterns wanting to come in and saying, hi, here, come here, worry about this.

You have to worry about this. And you say, no, I'll just be present with what is. There's no problem now.

I'm not going to worry. If I have to think about something practical, then I'll think in a focused way, but I'm not going to be taken over by my mind. Okay, returning to presence.

And then there will be another attempt, a little challenge happens in the traffic or wherever. It is, this driver is like a gust of wind. Why personalize a driver that does something to you?

Well, you wouldn't personalize a gust of wind and complain about the gust of wind that pushes your car this way or that way. It just is a natural phenomenon. And so simply you are with what is.

If there's an unconscious driver, it's just, that's what is. There's no inner self that is complaining about it. You remain present, you remain the master.

That's the, if you had that intensity, then the mind would never take you over again. And you would have your new career as a spiritual master. Or just be free of unhappiness, and that's enough.

But you cannot not be a master and affect everybody around you if you live in that state. Whether you want to or not, you may not be a formal spiritual teacher. You will, you always teach your state of consciousness.

If you're unconscious, you teach unconsciousness. And you will pull others into unconsciousness. It happens continuously.

So I sometimes use this paradox. You need time to awaken or to be enlightened or to be free. You need time until you realize that you don't need time.

As long as you believe you need time, you need time. And then the moment comes when you realize I don't really need time to be who I am. I am who I am already.

I am who I am. The formless essence of who I am cannot change. So time is not needed.

The full realization of that might take you time. Ha ha! How do you experience God?

What do you see when you see someone? Do you see more than their physicality? How I experience God, I've been talking about, this is really the only thing I talk about now in different words.

What do you see when you see someone? Do you see more than their physicality? No, I don't see more than their physicality.

I see exactly what everybody else sees, but I feel or sense something that is deeper than the physicality, and that is hard to put into words. There's a sensing of there's more to you than what I see, not as a thought, but as a knowing. And because I know there's more to this form than I can see or you can see here.

So the consciousness beyond the form looks through the form and senses, we don't have a word for it, I can say I sense or I feel, it's not quite right, maybe sense it is the closest, I would have to create a new word for it. I sense who you are or what you are beyond what I see, or beyond what you are telling me, or beyond what your mind is saying or your emotions are doing. So there's a connection with presence, the presence that is in you, the presence that you are.

And I have that more strongly than what I see, so that kind of almost obliterates what I see. What I see is the same as anybody sees, but that strong sense of consciousness, the alive presence that you are, is almost stronger than what I see. So there's more of my attention is in that than in my perception of what I see.

It's hard to put into words something that is so far beyond words. But this is not something special to me, this is something whenever you look at a human being and for a moment be free of definitions or interpretations, then you neither of yourself nor the other, nor definitions, be there as just a spacious awareness, then you begin to sense an aliveness within you and the same aliveness in the other. And then whatever the human beings do isn't that important anymore, you don't react to.

They may be saying something silly or intelligent or whatever, it doesn't matter that much, there's something deeper there. They may be deluded, they might want something from you, it doesn't matter anymore. It's very beautiful because it's only from that place that you can really relate, it's not the personality or the mind level.

That's the way to go for humans, to recognize each other as essentially sharing the same life, the same consciousness, recognizing oneness on a sense level, not on an intellectual level, feeling oneness. And that's love in a deeper sense, not the ego love, but the true love. The love comes from there.

You recognize that there is ultimately no other. The more you think in terms of others, the more you're in ego. He's like that, she's like that, she does that, he does that.

Remember I wrote in a book the famous Jean-Paul Sartre philosopher said, hell is other people. In the French original if you translate literally he says hell is the others. That's the ego's perception of other people.

A strong ego would see other people like that. And of course it can become so strong that you end up with things like paranoia because every strong ego has already an element of paranoia in it. Even before it's recognized as pathological, when it's still

normal, it has an element of paranoia in it.

And so any strong ego goes around the world in that way of what does he want, what does she want, what do you want from me? Oh, I know what he's thinking. Evil intentions and so on.

Very critical of others, they want something that's all very normal but already part of the insanity.

[Speaker 2] (4:26:08 - 4:35:40)

I couldn't explain it and I don't think Eckhart could have explained it, but it was almost it felt like for me this magnetic pull just to come together. So I followed that pull without thinking about it and having to take it day by day. And I saw, as I mentioned when I started seeing the expectations I had, how the mind can want to try to pull away from that somehow, let's call it an energetic pull.

A pull that's beyond thought. You know, because he didn't fit in with my image. But yet I couldn't deny this pull.

So every time I sat and still, there are many times in our relationship where I thought, I want out. This is just, it's not right for me. You know, these are the thoughts that was going on, you know, like, it's just, you know, because I had these expectations that he wasn't fulfilling.

But yet every time I sat in meditation and I said, do I want out now? And the answer was always no. What is it that I want now?

And that pull is still there. It hasn't gone away, it hasn't subsided. Will it go away?

I don't know. Will I be pulled somewhere else? I don't know.

But it doesn't matter because I'm not even going there. I just stay in this moment with this, the only word I can come up with is pull. This pull just to stay here, be here.

So it may not have that big romantic story behind it. But to me, that was. The romance is with this stillness and the form that came and arise that's here that I had the pull towards is beautiful, is love.

And all the stuff on the human level, well, yeah, that needs to be worked out. And it does, it works itself out. And it's amazing how much it works itself out.

The more that you're rooted in stillness, it's like, oh, OK, because things begin to fall away. You know, the expectations fall away and other perhaps, you know, the ideas about what a relationship should be like fall away. And here you are, you're just here.

So that's how we came together. I followed, you can call a pull, an impulse, the energy. Sometimes people ask me, how do I know that I'm in the right relationship?

I mean, sometimes I want to leave the relationship or he's that way, she's that way. He does this, she does that. And it just doesn't seem to fit with how I am.

And I guess I would say to that is that, who, who is asking all those questions? I guess it's, it's coming from the mind because it's not fitting in with your ideas about what you think a relationship is like. I had one person during an individual session say, my, my wife, my partner, I don't understand it and it really just really gets to me.

It ticks me off. But she walks out of the house without saying goodbye or she gets up in the morning, she doesn't even say good morning to me. I went, wow, this is really interesting.

Because he had the idea that she ought to be doing this, saying goodbye, saying good morning. And yeah, it might be nice, it's pleasant. But I also understood the same thing is because in my family, we never said that either.

We never said goodbye. We never said good morning. We would walk out of the house without saying anything.

We just walk out, we'd get up, not say anything. And I thought, wow. Because his idea was that, oh, she doesn't love me because I had said I want her to say goodbye to me.

I wanted to say good morning and yet she won't do it, you know. And, and so he didn't know actually, because he didn't know whether she loved him and whether he could love somebody who didn't say, I mean, I'm sure there was more to it than this, but this is what, this was the example he was giving. He, he didn't know.

And it's like, and I did share with him about my family thing. And I thought, you know, maybe it has nothing to do with you. It could be just that this is how she is in terms of how she's been brought up or whatever.

Can you let go? What is it in you that you are demanding her to be different? What is it in you that you just can't be the space in which allows this to happen?

Oh, she's leaving. You notice her. Bye.

I mean, Eckhart still does that to me. He'll go, you know, I'm about to do something or leave. Actually, now I say goodbye.

But you know, before it's like, all of a sudden he'll say goodbye or he'll say, good morning. And I'm like, oh yeah, yeah, good morning. But it's not because I don't love him.

And it's not because I want to just, you know, I'm rude or, you know, whatever idea you think of or judgment that you have on it. It's because that was part of my conditioning. Our family never did that.

So it is the investigation. And what better opportunity for spiritual awakening, but in daily life. And it's in daily life, and especially in relationships, that you begin to see what is actually being reflected back.

Because what's being reflected back is really what's going on internally, inside the mind. So for those who are on the verge of wanting to walk out, just stop. And you can even ask yourself, as I did many times, what do I want right now?

Do I want to leave right now? No. Because only the mind I saw wanted to leave, wanted to get out, for whatever reason, you know, the thought that it wasn't good enough, it wasn't what I wanted, or he didn't do what I wanted.

When you come back into stillness, right action always follows. So from a place of stillness, you will know without a doubt, that you'll find yourself walking out. You'll just leave.

And it may be, you know, you don't know, you might leave that day, or you might sit down and just sort of talk and say, I want to, I want to come out, and who knows what will happen. But it's really beginning to also communicate that truth, what it is that you feel, what's going on inside you, from a place that is non-threatening, to be able to communicate it, what's going on. And just to be in that stillness, and you'll know.

[Speaker 1] (4:35:45 - 5:58:38)

The moment of stillness, before we start, not waiting for anything to happen, but just being in the moment now. Make sure you're comfortable in your own skin, as you sit there. If you're not comfortable, then just notice that you're not comfortable, and allow yourself to not be comfortable, and then you become comfortable.

I have a little treat in store, we will talk about, not only talk about, but go into the essence of the book that has been with me, accompanied me for the past 30 years. A book that I've gone to, back to, periodically, I still go back to, periodically, pick it up, read a page or two or three, and meditate on it. It's one of the great treasures of spiritual literature, and it is a book that was written in China 2,500 years ago, the Tao Te Ching.

Now that's a huge, seemingly a huge gulf that separates us from that time period, and yet the book is still vitally alive. And if a book that was written so long ago is still vitally alive, it means it must have been written from a very deep place, and point to something that is timeless. If it were not written from a deep, timeless place within the author, and did not point to something that is beyond time, a book written 2,500 years ago would be irrelevant, meaningless, incomprehensible.

Many books that were written 20 years ago are out of date, or if you read yesterday's newspaper, it's out of date. So for something to still be alive now, and to be deeply meaningful to many people, there must be something there that is timeless, and that is the essence of the book, and that's what I would like to go into with you. So we are not going into a book.

We are not just going to study a book. We are just using the text to go deeply within, to discover something within ourselves. So all that the book is, is a device that helps us discover ourselves and our connection with the greater whole, the universe, whatever you want to call it.

So just very briefly, the historical context, it might be helpful to know a little bit about that. This book was written about 2,500-2,600 years ago in China, that in other words, 500-600 BC. Now that was a very exciting and meaningful time period.

Something incredible was happening during those, let's say, one and a half to two centuries. For the first time in the history of humanity, as far as we can see, there was a universal wave of spiritual awakening coming over the planet at that time. So the author of the Tao Te Ching, Lao Tse, is a contemporary more or less of the Buddha in India.

So the Buddha and his teaching arose at the same time, approximately as the teaching of Lao Tse, the author of the Tao Te Ching. So there was the Buddha arising in India, beginning to teach, and another significant teacher in India whose teaching did not go very much beyond India even to this day, but has remained very meaningful and profound in India, Mahavira, taught at approximately the same time as the Buddha, and it developed into Jainism, the religion, a very beautiful religion still practiced widely in India based on ahimsa, non-violence, and respect for all living beings. All those things were revelations when they first came into being at the time, the teachings. So we have the Buddha in India, we have Mahavira in India, all arising at the same time.

In Persia we have Zoroaster, sometimes called Zarathustra, not to be confused with Nietzsche's Zarathustra, which is a completely different character, Zarathustra the prophet in Persia. We have at the same time in ancient Greece, and that was a time before the famous Greek philosophers started to teach, Plato, Aristotle, Socrates, it was earlier than that, those were philosophers that arose for the first time there, they are called pre-Socratic philosophers because they predate Socrates. We only have fragments of their philosophy, but those fragments are enough to show us that their teachings were in some ways, this is how I feel, more profound than the later more differentiated teachings of Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle.

My favourite pre-Socratic philosophers are Heraclitus and Parmenides, and we only have small fragments, but the fragments show us that those teachings were still in touch with the source of being, the source of life, the oneness that underlies all phenomena. And later as the philosophy became more differentiated, that was becoming lost. The

philosophies became very interesting and much more differentiated, but the connection with the root of all life, the unmanifested oneness, the transcendental dimension, gradually became lost.

So those philosophers 500 and 600 BC still had that connection, and they showed people, they also realised that humanity had lost it, so it was part of the wave of awakening that was coming over the planet, the teaching of those philosophers. This is not philosophy as we understand it these days. It's about inner transformation, not speculation.

Those were not speculative philosophers, in the same way that Buddha wasn't speculative, Mahavira wasn't speculative. So it is a transformational teaching. It's about inner transformation, not about figuring something out with your mind.

So we have that arising, the awakening arising in Persia, the awakening arising in India, the awakening arising in ancient Greece, and now we come to China, we have Lao Tse, his teaching at the same time was arising in China. All part of this wave of awakening that we are now experiencing again, even on a much larger scale now. So we are at a similar time period, except that the wave of awakening that is coming into this world, of spiritual awakening, is on a much larger and more powerful and all-pervasive scale.

So we are in the middle of that. A hundred, two hundred years ago, nobody in the West was discussing the Tao Te Ching, and this is why we can go back to it and understand it, because we are awakening. Lao Tse, we know very little about his life.

He was, they say, in charge of the archives of a kingdom called Shu, and reached, we don't know how old he was when he was becoming bored with the life of the court and the intrigues and the conflicts around him, and so he decided to leave his job and to leave his homeland and just go out into solitude. And the story goes, nobody knows whether it is true, that he left and he got to the border of the kingdom, there was a front, a little border crossing and a gate, and the gatekeeper said, I'm not going to let you pass unless you write down your wisdom. So he must already have had a certain reputation as a wise man, but he had never written anything.

And so, all he could do, he said, okay then, I'll write it down. We don't know how long it took, he wrote it down, and the gatekeeper let him go, and that is the Tao Te Ching. That is the teaching, and that is the book.

And then, according to one story, the last we ever know of him, he was sitting on a water buffalo, riding off into nowhere, and that's the last that anybody ever heard of him, nobody ever saw him again. That's one version of the story. Another version of the story is that he continued to teach and reached the age of 160 years.

The Tao Te Ching is the title of the book, which is not usually translated. People have

tried to translate it, but unsuccessfully. Usually they give you subtitles.

So it says, Tao Te Ching, one of the traditional subtitles is The Way and Its Virtue, and that's already somewhat of a mistranslation. Although Tao can be translated as The Way, you just can't translate Tao, even if you translate it as Way, it's pretty meaningless. And if you're a Chinese person, you're not at a great advantage, you still won't know what Tao is.

So you're not at a great advantage. The Tao is something that cannot be named. We'll come to that in a minute.

So the subtitle, The Way and Its Virtue, Virtue is a mistranslation of the Te in the Tao Te Ching. Virtue has become a dead word in our language. When did you last say Virtue?

When did you last use that word? Probably many years ago, if ever. So the word Virtue is not alive.

What it really refers to is the power. So to translate, it's the power of the spirit. Of spirit, of the transcendental dimension.

The Way and Its Power is a better subtitle for the Tao Te Ching. The Way, how to live. The way to living, living in alignment with the one power that underlies the universe.

The one thing that you cannot name, that is not a thing. Living in alignment with the ultimate, which sometimes is called God, but the moment you call it God, it's not it. You've made it into something.

It is not something. It is something that flows through the entire universe, animates the entire universe, and at the same time is beyond it. That is the Tao.

And that is something that you can discover within yourself. You can live in a way that connects you with the inner source of all life, of all being. So the Way and Its Power.

He is teaching us how to live so that we are in alignment with the power that underlies all life, which, as Lao Tzu says, for the lack of a better word, I'll call it the Tao. And the Tao, that's a good thing, because you can't do much with a word that you cannot exactly see what it means. The same way that Buddha used the word emptiness.

You cannot worship emptiness. It's a negative term. It negates form.

So it's always been the tendency for humans to worship emptiness. Worship concepts. The concept of God arises in your mind, and then you start talking about God.

The concept of God becomes an idol, because it's no more than a thought. So you can't do that with the Tao, because you can't picture it. You can't form an image of it, in the same way that you can't form a picture, an image of emptiness.

So that is the transcendental reality that the book points to, and it shows us the way to it. So there's great power there. And the book came to me for the first time in my 20s, maybe mid-20s.

Somebody said, have a look at this. This is interesting. And I looked at it, and something drew me into it, but then I couldn't quite...

It was so obscure that I couldn't... I knew there was something hiding there in the book. There was some truth hiding, but I couldn't get it.

It was there, and then I put it aside and, OK, I have other things to do now. And then years passed, and then in my early 30s, I rediscovered the book in a different translation. There are many translations available.

And not only was the translation better, something had by then taken place within me, an awakening, a shift in consciousness. And through that new consciousness, I looked at the book, and I said, wow, that's... he's talking...

I know what he's talking about. I realized the depth and the profundity of what those words were saying. And since then, the book in different versions, not the actual physical book, but the Tao Te Ching has never left me.

It's always been with me in one way, one form or another. So that's the story behind the Tao Te Ching. And now let's see if we can go a little deeper into it.

We are going to use... There are two translations that at the moment are my favorites. We will use Stephen Mitchell's translation, fairly recent, Tao Te Ching.

Another translation that I've had for a number of years that I'm very fond of is by Jia-Fu Feng and Jane English. They together translated the Tao Te Ching. And that's another beautiful translation.

I will be using mainly for today Stephen Mitchell's translation or version of it. And the first two lines of the Tao Te Ching are very famous. I've quoted it quite a few times.

But even there, sometimes translations differ. The first two lines are, the Tao that can be told is not the eternal Tao. What he is saying is, you cannot really speak about the ultimate reality.

Whatever you say about it is not it. However, he then continues to talk about it. So how is that?

Well, he's telling you not to attach yourself to the words, not to begin to believe in the words or in concepts, not to make it into some new belief. The truth is not in the words. That's what he's saying.

The truth, the words only point to the truth. And the truth is only to be found within you, beyond the realm of mind or of thinking or of concepts. So that's just a little, very important, those first two lines.

The Tao that can be told is not the eternal Tao. Okay, and now let me tell you about it. Because the Tao is in you.

And the only place where you can discover it is in you. And so the book shows the way to discover who you are beyond who you thought you are, beyond whatever your mind is telling you, who you are. And now, the closest he comes to defining the Tao, which cannot be defined, I'm just saying the closest he comes to defining it is in these little lines, which I'll read to you now.

And again, you need to listen to that, not just with your head, but you need to listen to that with your belly or your entire being, those words, because you cannot understand them just through the mind. If they are meaningful, or if you can sense the power that is in the words, then you are sensing your own power beyond thought activity. There was something formless and perfect before the universe was born.

It is serene, empty, solitary, unchanging, infinite, eternally present. It is the mother of the universe. For lack of a better name, I call it the Tao.

Note that he begins by saying there was something formless and perfect before the universe was born, before the arising of form, before the Big Bang, you could say. He uses the past tense. In the next line, he says, it is serene, empty, solitary.

It is not only that which was there before the world came into being, it is that which continues to be there timelessly at the core of your being. That which was there before the Big Bang is still present in you, the unmanifested, one life, one consciousness, without which you are nothing. It is the essence of who you are.

And of course, if you say that to a normal, materialist scientist, whatever, I'm saying a normal scientist, not a great scientist, then he'll say, what is this nonsense? Or if you tell it to somebody who is totally close to you, they'll say, this is mumbo-jumbo. There was something before the universe was born and there's something, what are you talking about?

And now, listen, he very wisely, Stephen Mitchell, put in a little quote by one of the great scientists, Albert Einstein, what he had to say about it. Somebody who did a lot of thinking, but whose thinking was rooted in the stillness, which, as we shall see, is an essential part of the teaching of the Tao. His thinking was rooted in the Tao, in the stillness beyond the noisy mind.

That's where Einstein's realizations came from. And so, he was not just trapped in his noisy mind, like most scientists, and then deny the reality of the transcendental, but he

was connected with it. And he said, I'm not used to quoting from books and talks, here's Einstein talking, the scientist's religious feeling takes the form of a rapturous amazement at the harmony of natural law, which reveals an intelligence of such superiority that, in comparison with it, all systematic thinking of human beings is an utterly insignificant reflection.

This feeling is the guiding principle of my life and work, the recognition of a vast intelligence that underlies all of creation. Instead of saying, what, somebody, something more intelligent than me, that can't be, that's mumbo-jumbo. But something that I can't understand, I can't categorize, what mumbo-jumbo is that?

This is what the dowdy jingle is standing on tiptoe, and you're not stable. It's in the flower. It creates that.

It's in you. It pervades the very space around us. It comes through the human brain, becomes, the brain is like a, gives it some form.

And when the brain goes, it no longer goes through that form. It's the very consciousness that you are. So this shows that Einstein was in touch with that dimension.

That's why his thinking was inspired. That's why he had sudden revelations. Now, now we come to the first, slightly longer, just a few lines, never more than a few lines at a time.

How to live, to be in touch with that. Can, I'll read the whole, this little section first, and then we'll look at the lines and go into it. Not just, not with the intellectual mind, but sensing our way into it.

Can you coax your mind from its wandering and keep to the original oneness? Can you let your body become supple as a newborn child's? Can you cleanse your inner vision until you see nothing but the light?

Can you love people and lead them without imposing your will? Can you with the most vital matters by letting events take their course? Can you step back from your own mind and thus understand all things, giving birth and nourishing, having without possessing, acting with no expectation, leading and not trying to control?

This is the supreme virtue. For virtue, substitute power. The power moves through you.

If you live in that way, you become it. You realize your oneness with it. Back to the beginning.

Can you coax your mind from its wandering? It wanders about. If you look at your own mind, that's what it does.

It goes, one thing to another, one thought leads to another thought, and it goes on and on. Sometimes I call it the voice in the head. Can you coax your mind from its wandering and keep to the original oneness?

In other words, is it possible for you to sit still for a moment and don't give attention to every thought that says, follow me, I'll show you the way. That's what every thought is. I'm important.

Think about this, think about this. Okay, and once you follow up one thought, it becomes another one, and another. That's how most people live.

Continuously immersed in just chatter, mental chatter, streams of thinking. It's even become literature in the 20th century. It's called the stream of consciousness, James Joyce.

You get 30 pages without any punctuation marks, just he wrote down how he observed his own mind and he wrote down how it works. It goes on and on. No period, no comma, nothing.

Normal. So once you know that, and most of these people don't even know that. They are so identified with it.

It's just, that's who I am. I just, I think. But it's not even that they say, I think, because they are the thoughts.

And they miss the vast dimension within, at least underneath thoughts. That's why I say, okay, just don't give all that importance to your thoughts. Just come to a point of rest.

This is where the present moment becomes so important because it's the present moment that can take you out of the stream of thinking. Just becoming alert to this moment. There's nothing much to think about as you sit here.

What can you add to this moment that's better than what's already here? Or when you look at a flower, why add thought to it? Or when you look at another human being, why add thought to the beautiful perception of that?

And you keep to the original oneness. The moment you're no longer dominated by thinking and you realize there's a realm beyond thinking inside me, you're connected to the oneness because it's only through thinking that the illusion of separation arises when you start calling things this and that and judging and naming. Doesn't mean you can't do it anymore, but you're not trapped in it anymore.

Can you let your body become supple as a newborn child? When you are immersed in thinking, your body becomes rigid because it reflects what's going on in here, a lot of which is problematic. I need to think about this.

And the more problematic your thinking is and all thinking is problematic, the more lifeless your body becomes and the flow of energy through the body diminishes. You get rigid, you get tense, you're holding in. Can you let your body become supple as a newborn child?

This is a free translation. If you go back to the more literal translation, he's actually saying, can you concentrate your chi or your vital energy until your body becomes supple as a little child? This is really, he's teaching body awareness.

Can you go within, take attention into the body and to feel that you are alive inside? Can you feel the aliveness in your hands? Can you feel the aliveness in your feet?

Can you feel the aliveness that pervades the entire body, takes you out of your mind? Even as you sit here, can you feel that? There's a very ancient Taoist practice, thousands of years old, almost as old as the Tao Te Ching, which tells you you should breathe from your heels upward.

It says, can you breathe from your heels upward? Of course you can't because you can't suck in air with your feet. But what it's saying is it is directing attention to your feet and you imagine that you're breathing from down there, you're breathing through your heels.

What that does is you suddenly become aware it starts from the bottom of your entire energy field. As I'm breathing in, just simply imagine you're breathing in from your feet, energy starts to move in from down there. Imagine that you're actually breathing in from your feet and then the energy of the breath flows into the body, very ancient practice.

At particular, I only discovered two days ago that somebody, that thousands of years ago they recommended that already. And I said, oh, that's the inner body, that's what I was talking about, I always talk about. Can you cleanse your inner vision until you see nothing but the light?

That is perhaps somewhat obscure, although there's light in it, to the mind it's a little obscure. What do you mean cleanse your inner vision until you see nothing but the light? The light is the light of consciousness.

Cleansing your inner vision is to still the mind until you become aware of awareness, until you become aware that you are conscious. And then that remains always there. This entire little chapter is really how to be in the world, but at the same time connected with the source.

At this moment, it might be easier if you forget, don't think of yourself as somebody having a past, don't think of yourself somebody having a future. What's left of you right now without that? Consciousness, just a presence, not an opinion or memory.

That's the light of consciousness and that's the Tao really. You cannot grasp it. You

cannot make it your object of knowledge and say, oh, there it is, there's the light of consciousness, I can see the light of consciousness.

No, you are the light of consciousness through which everything is seen. You can't see it, you can't grasp it, it underlies everything. It's so there, it's who you are.

It's your presence. When I say your presence, it's not quite right because it's not yours, it's you, it's oneness. If I say your presence, then there's you and presence, but language works in that way.

It creates duality and that's what the Tao Te Ching is about, is realizing that that's an illusion. Can you love people and lead them without imposing your will? This is imposing your will in another translation, it's always helpful to look at different translations.

It says, can you be without cleverness in this world? I talk about cleverness in one of the books, that the ego is clever because it tries to work out some advantage for myself or for us. It has its little schemes.

It tries to use people. That's cleverness. Politicians are clever, most of them.

Very few are intelligent. PhD doesn't mean you're intelligent. Well, whether they have PhDs or not, it has nothing to do with that.

Intelligence is to see the larger whole of all and then not just act to enhance one little fragment and then be in opposition to the rest of the world of life, but see the totality. Can you be without cleverness? Can you deal with the most vital matters by letting events take their course?

That's a very fundamental teaching of the Tao, is not to interfere in the way things are moving. So there's no violence whatsoever and that's of course beautifully practiced in all martial arts. In martial arts, the opposing energy that is coming towards you is not resisted.

This is deeply influenced by the Tao Te Ching, non-resistance going with the movement of life. The Western approach is somebody comes towards you and you hit back. It comes towards you and you go and the Eastern is it comes, the force is coming towards you and you go with it and then suddenly your opponent falls.

The very energy of that attack movement is used to defeat the opponent. You have not opposed it, you go with it. There's almost, we can say, no violence in it and yet extremely powerful and that can be applied in many things.

It can be applied in daily life, in not getting involved in useless discussions, not identifying with mental positions of rightness. I'm right and you are wrong and then you start, this energy totally takes you out of yourself. Not engaging in useless discussions,

being able to listen in a state of openness to another, not identifying with your opinions and then opposing somebody else's opinion.

Can you step back? Oh, before that, can you deal with the most vital matters by letting events take their course? Now, I looked at another translation that's a little closer to the original which says, instead of by letting events take your course, it says, by becoming the female.

Can you deal with the most vital matters by becoming the female? The female principle, female is often used as synonymous with the Tao. So one could almost say that the feminine principle is the principle of allowing, which is like this, whereas the male principle is this.

If you want to see it and express this, the male goes like that, the female goes like that. And according to this teaching, the female is, one could almost say, expresses the Tao more clearly than the male. It's somewhat easier to express the Tao through the female form than the male form.

If you're male, then you have to discover the female in yourself to be one with the Tao also. You have to discover that. For example, when I say, allow this moment to be as it is, that's a female.

You're not fighting what is. You're allowing what is. There's an embracing.

You see it sometimes with Kuan Yin statues, the holding hands like that, or Virgin Mary statues, which are all expressions of the female, all embracing, all embracing. Can you be the female in any situation? And that's, in a discussion, some women would say, I don't like this idea.

I want to be powerful. They don't realize that the power of the female is enormous. The power of allowing is far greater than the power of interfering.

Can you be the female? Let's see what else we have before we go to another longer one. How you receive this depends on your degree of openness to this message.

So, this sounds very familiar to me. That's why I'm just reading it to you, just a few lines. Some say that my teaching is nonsense.

Others call it lofty but impractical. But to those who have looked inside themselves, this nonsense makes perfect sense. And to those who put it into practice, this loftiness has roots that go deep.

So, there are some people in whom the openness is not there, and then whatever, what we are talking about here is totally nonsensical. So, there needs to be something in you that recognizes the truth of this beyond words and concepts. Empty your mind of all

thoughts.

Let your heart be at peace. I'm going to read the same again in a different translation. Just gives you a slightly different sense, feel.

Empty yourself of everything. Let the mind become still. Empty yourself of everything.

Let the mind become still. Watch the turmoil of beings, but contemplate their return. Watch the turmoil of this world, of all the activity of this world, of all beings involved in running around.

Watch it, which means be the awareness, and contemplate their return. They all return to the formless, sooner or later. All the forms.

Imagine you're seeing a movie. I always, I love to see old movies, like movies made in the 30s or so, or 40s. And I love seeing, for example, you see street scenes, actual street scenes, big city, London, New York, whatever, people, hundreds of people running around to go about their business.

But this is what the turmoil of beings, as it's called here, you have to see it. And I see that in amazement, I watch that. This refers to watch, but contemplate their return.

And when I watch that, I realize all these people, the actual street scenes, all these people are no longer there. They're all dead now. It was so important, what they were doing.

It looked so important, running around, cars going. And if you had seen a speeded-up version of the movie, if you see a speeded-up version of anything, if you saw a speeded-up version of this room, like you sometimes see how a flower, it's a wonderful image, if you see, they do it on film, how a plant comes suddenly out of the soil. And so they, over a period of a few hours or a few days, it's filmed.

So you see that period, within a few seconds, contracted. So you see actually how the plant comes out of the soil, then leaves come out of the plant, and the flower comes out. And suddenly, you see, the flower is wilting.

The leaves are wilting and falling off. And then the entire plant goes, gone. This is what it's talking about.

You have to actually see. It's an amazing thing when the touch can, we'll touch to see that, when you truly watch that, something inside you goes, you can't put it into words, it goes, wow. Because you realize that applies to everything in this world.

It's that way. It comes into being. Every body, I'm really, I'm looking at my own body when I see it.

It's just a slightly different version of that. It lasts a few years longer than the plant. But if you saw even the baby growing into an adult, you would, maturity, vitally alive, physically active, and then gradually, winding down.

And then beginning to look like a wrinkled apple or a pear. And then, suddenly, the life force leaves. And then, soon later, all the molecules and atoms say goodbye.

We're going our own way now. And there's nothing left. Just an emptiness.

If you saw this room, and the people in this room, and let's see if we didn't move from this room, and we had a camera here, you would see gradually the bodies dissolving or evaporating, whatever, it would go very quickly. I sometimes compare them to soap bubbles popping. So if you saw this, we had this camera here over a period of, let's see, how long do you want to live?

Another 50 years? Then the soap bubbles would pop one after another. Nothing left.

And then for a little while longer, the physical forms would stay. And then you would see, gradually, even the physical forms crumbling. It could take 2,000 years or whatever, depending on atmospheric conditions.

And even then, the chairs could become dust. So everything is dissolving, birth, dissolution, everything, every form. It's impermanent.

And to watch, it's extremely powerful to watch that. This is why he's telling you, watch the turmoil of beings, but contemplate their return, means be aware of the impermanence of all forms, not as a negative thing, but simply as you see it for what it is. And if you are aware of the impermanence of all forms, that all forms are short-lived, how can you be aware of it?

There must be something in you that is beyond that. It's only from, as I sometimes say, if the entire universe were blue, the colour blue would not exist for you, because there would be nothing to differentiate it from. If we said, everything is blue, you say, what are you talking about?

There's blue? What's blue? There's no other colour.

If everything were impermanent, you wouldn't even know it. But there is something in you that is beyond that. It's only from there.

And that is why the contemplation of impermanence can put you in touch with that, because that in you, which is the consciousness, the timeless presence, the light of consciousness, is not touched by that. And then the question the mind asks is, well, but what about when I die, I lose consciousness? Or if a brick falls on my head, I lose consciousness.

What about that? All it means is that consciousness can no longer flow through your brain into this world. It then has to withdraw and seek another channel.

Consciousness is not affected. You cannot lose consciousness. Isn't that amazing?

Why not? Because you are consciousness. It's the essence of who you are.

So you can't lose yourself. Consciousness, you can also say life. You can call it life.

You can call it Tao. It's the unmanifested, underlying, the timeless essence of all life, that which animates all life forms for brief periods, each form of brief period, you are that. You can't think about that.

If you think about it, it doesn't make sense. You have to sense that in yourself. Now, sense that.

You can't know it as an object of knowledge. You can only know it as yourself, because it's the subject of all knowledge. Each separate being in the universe returns to the common source.

Returning to the source is serenity. Another word for serenity is stillness. All things return to the source out of which they have come, the life, the unmanifested one life.

Returning to the source is stillness. Now, the wonderful thing is, we don't have to wait until we die to return to the source. To live a life that is filled with power and wisdom, we can return to the source before the body dies, and live in a state of connectedness with the source of life.

And that's why it says returning to the source is stillness. When you find the stillness within yourself, you're returning to the source of all life. What is stillness?

Just a moment when you're not thinking, but still conscious. Just an inner space, like now. Okay, ready for this?

Here are all your thoughts, and now we go. Then thoughts come creeping back, and then we go, and suddenly there's a, can you sense that there is a space inside you that's just conscious? Where you don't call yourself anything or call me anything?

You're returning to the source, to the formless, the timeless in you. If you don't realize the source, you stumble in confusion and sorrow. If you don't realize the source in yourself, you stumble in confusion and sorrow.

That's how most people live, unfortunately. Stumbling about, unconnected with who they are, disconnected from who they are, not realizing the source of their being. There is immediately, there's confusion, which is mental confusion, the mind creating all kinds of pseudo problems.

You yourself, you become a problem to yourself. You become a problem to others. You become a problem to the planet.

You become a problem, or you contribute to the problem-making of the world, and that's the normal way to be. You stumble in confusion and, so that's confusion, and sorrow is the suffering that comes when you are not connected with that dimension in yourself, in your daily life. You suffer.

That's a destiny, that's what the Buddha said. Life is suffering, unless you go beyond suffering, which is the teaching. It shows you the way, as the Tao Te Ching does.

Confusion and sorrow, you can't get rid of it, no matter how you try to rearrange your outer life, or think, if I achieve that or that, I'll be fine. You won't. So you stumble in confusion and sorrow.

You need to find the source, and it's not even hidden, it's just there underneath the mental noise. So when you realize the source, realize, of course, doesn't mean you have some kind of intellectual idea about it. Realize is when you have no idea, when the ideas, the importance of ideas diminishes, and there's just a space of awareness.

Ideas are secondary. In fact, you will have some interesting ideas coming out of that, creative ideas, new ideas, new insights, but they are secondary. When you where you come from, you naturally become tolerant, disinterested, amused, kind-hearted as a grandmother, dignified as a king, immersed in the wonder of the Tao, you can deal with whatever life brings you, and when death comes, you're ready.

Beautiful images explains who or what you become when you live in connectedness with that, no longer as a little entity that thinks itself to be separate from the universe and from other human beings and from everything. You become tolerant, disinterested, it's not uninterested, disinterested, amused. There's a little bit of amusement and all the things that people in this world feel is so serious and so important and all their fears and ambitions and all the things they run after.

You then become a little bit amused at all this, what is called the turmoil of beings running around like little rabbits. All this and so on. I have so many problems to think about.

Oh my god, what's happening? Oh no, god. You become amused a little, there's a slight smile.

Sometimes you might even laugh, but there's a slight, a little bit of a smile, because you know it's not ultimately real what they believe to be so important is ultimately not that real. It's a temporary thing. It's relatively real, not ultimately real.

In other words, everything is a little bit like a dream. For example, what happened to you

yesterday? Where is it now?

A little bit like a dream, whatever was important then. Even breakfast this morning. Okay, did I have breakfast or was it a dream?

Not that much difference. Or you come to the end of your life and suddenly you think back all those years. That was a long dream.

Was it a nightmare? And you become kind-hearted as a grandmother. Nice image.

The grandmother was already been through everything. It's a little bit like the big-bellied Buddha that you see that is influenced, the Taoist-influenced Buddha, the Chinese big-bellied Buddha. He sits there.

Sometimes people who think they have lots of problems in their lives, I recommend that they should get a big-bellied Buddha and look at it quite often when they think they have problems. Because the Buddha, he's actually laughing. He's at a huge belly and he always goes, oh, it's not serious.

It implies that he is connected with something deeper. He doesn't take the world that seriously. And so his influence is beneficial.

It's only people who take the world not that seriously they can actually be of benefit to the world and improve the world. But if you think that the world is absolutely serious, you're not going to improve it. You can just contribute to the madness.

You will be fighting one or somebody or some organization or some group of people. It's serious, serious. That little bit of detachment, you become the Buddha, the big-bellied Buddha or the grandmother and dignified as a king with a certain dignity or integrity to who you are.

The same dignity and integrity that each animal has, that many humans have lost. One with itself. I feel always when I look at a dog or a cat or bird, whatever it is, it is one with itself, with who it is.

It has enormous dignity. And then sometimes you can see the contrast if you look at a particularly silly human being. And sometimes silly human beings have a dog that's very dignified.

And the only times when they get out of their silliness is when they pet their dog. For a moment they can truly be themselves for a moment. With all other people they're playing some kind of silly roles, not knowing that they're playing roles.

And then they come in, for a moment their dog gives them the ability to relax for a moment and be who they are without pretending. And that's why they don't know it. That's why they love their dog or their cat so much.

Because they can be themselves. They find themselves through that. That's the integrity of the animal, the dignity of the animal.

But it's in you also. This is a nice one about people who are in control of something, of an organisation or a country or whatever. How to rule a country or an organisation.

When the master governs, the people are hardly aware that he exists. Next best is a leader who is loved. Next, one who is feared.

The worst is one who is despised. If you don't trust the people, you make them untrustworthy. The master doesn't talk, he acts.

When his work is done, the people say, amazing, we did it all by ourselves. So the greatest ruler is not even aware that he or she is there. Hardly aware that he or she is there, does not interfere, never says, look at me, I did that, identifying with their actions and taking credit for what they did.

I did that. Or arguing with somebody, you didn't do it, I did that. That same thing can exist.

This talks about having gone beyond ego and beyond mind and identification with action. You also find this phenomenon in some very simple people who haven't developed an ego yet. They sometimes do wonderful things, but there's no entity that says, look, I did that, or how it feels, I did that.

Beautifully expressed in the film Forrest Gump, where the hero or the anti-hero does not have an ego, he is below ego. He helps many people and many good things come into his life, but he has no sense of a separate self. He lives in the right way, not what this describes, because this describes of going beyond ego, but he hasn't arrived at ego yet, so he still lives in the sense of oneness.

And if you live in the sense of oneness, the universe to a large extent becomes helpful. Helpful things come into your life, because you are no longer separating yourself from life. That begins with being in a state of oneness with the present moment, accepting the moment as it is.

That's really all you need to do. Then you're in a state of oneness with life, not imposing anything on the present moment, judgments, reactions, and if they are there, accept that they are there. So you can always accept what is, whatever level, either accept what is externally or accept what is internally.

And now here's a very wonderful thing about how your state of consciousness affects the world, that there's a correlation between the collective consciousness of humanity and the state of the planet. And there is a correlation between your state of consciousness and whatever happens to you, not always apparent immediately, but there is a

correlation between what's within you and what happens to you or what you attract into your life. And furthermore, it's not so much that what happens to you is your fate or your destiny.

Your destiny is determined not by what happens to you, that's what people think, that what happens to me determines my life. Your life is determined, your destiny is determined by how you respond to what happens. And what happens next is determined by how you react or respond to what happens now.

So something seemingly bad happens, something goes wrong. If your reaction is negative, you attract the next negative thing. If your reaction is a response that says, well, this is how it is, now let's deal with that.

The next thing will reflect that state of consciousness. Many people are trapped their whole lives in a stream of same kind of unpleasant things happening continuously to them because they don't realize at any given moment there's a freedom for them to change their lives by reacting differently to what happens. Your present reaction determines the future, not what happens.

Your reaction to what happens determines the next moment. That's how you can change your life rather than being trapped in bad karma for a very long time. Very easy, but it requires awareness.

And here we talk, the Tao Te Ching talks about how the collective consciousness affects the planet. In harmony with the Tao, the sky is clear and spacious. The earth is solid and full.

All creatures flourish together, content with the way they are, endlessly repeating themselves, endlessly renewed. When man interferes with the Tao, the sky becomes filthy. The earth becomes depleted.

The equilibrium crumbles. Creatures become extinct. The master views the parts with compassion because he understands the whole.

His constant practice is humility. He doesn't glitter like a jewel, but lets himself be shaped by the Tao, as rugged and common as a stone. Beautiful images.

When humans collectively live out of touch with the greater consciousness, the Tao, the transcendent, the reality, whatever they manifest externally reflects that state of disconnectedness. And then the planet around them suffers. It's simply a reflection of a state of consciousness.

And so, this eternal principle, he already saw 2,500 years ago. And that also implies that the solution to what is happening to the planet cannot be found exclusively on the external level. Yes, of course, we need to change things that we do on the external level.

But unless the consciousness, the state of consciousness that is our habitual state, changes, even if we remove one evil from somewhere out there, it will be replaced by some other thing that has the same harmful influence on nature and the planet. So, the fundamental is the shift in consciousness in humans, in humanity, but not waiting for others to change. Humanity is you.

Humanity is I. You are humanity. The shift in consciousness needs to happen in you, and then the planet will be saved.

So, that is vital. Here we have the two beautiful lines. The master always means the enlightened being, the being in touch with the Tao.

Here he happens to use the he pronoun, but he changes continuously in this translation. Chinese doesn't differentiate, apparently, with the pronoun. Traditionally, it's always he in the old translation of the Tao Te Ching, but in this Stephen Mitchell translation, he shifts continuously from he to she.

It happens to be he here, but it doesn't matter. The master views the parts with compassion because he understands the whole. He understands the whole.

He is connected with the whole. Then you can look upon the parts, the individual human beings and the many different life forms with compassion, because you recognize them as expressions of, manifestations of the one life that you also are. Manifestations or expressions of the one consciousness that is the essence also of who you are.

When you don't impose thoughts on, continuously impose thoughts on reality, but allow things to be, allow a flower to be, with that spaciousness, spacious perception. Another human being. Compassion comes out of that state.

Compassion has a deeper level to it, and that is the recognition of oneness. Out of that comes true compassion. The recognition that, in essence, you and I share a common source and consciousness.

Not a source in the distant past, a source we share, a common source now. And that's not an intellectual thing. The realization comes the less you impose thoughts on other people, judgments, definitions, and on yourself.

You start thinking about my life. What about my life? And then you define your life as either good or bad, fulfilling or unfulfilling, satisfying or unsatisfying.

And you have all kinds of opinions, all kinds of opinions about me and my life. And you have a whole, a whole structure in your mind develops that you call my life. And for many people that mental consists of thoughts all clinging together.

This is all part of the edifice of my life. And it's here. And they all cling together, and

people think that's who they are.

It's just thoughts about its definitions, about them. They're just thoughts. And when you don't know that, that cuts you off from who you, the power that is there underneath all that, the power of consciousness itself, the Tao.

You're cut off, and you live as if that thing were real, and you try to somehow make it better on that, on the level of the thought structure of my life, or try to convince yourself that, oh, my life isn't that bad after all. And then you get a little bit of, okay, I'm feeling a little bit better today because I just hadn't thought that my life isn't so bad after all. Or, or you see somebody who is in suffering say, oh, I'm better off than that person.

And you have a little bit of happiness. My life isn't so bad. Many people's lives are far worse than my life.

Okay, I should feel good. Okay. A little bit of feeling a little bit good for a few moments.

But the structure of my life is not a satisfying one for almost anybody. If you don't go beyond that structure, you might think the people you read about in People magazine or wherever are better off, they're just as unhappy as everybody else. Because they, unless they've gone deeper, some may have.

My life, it's a figment of the imagination. There's no such thing as my life. I don't have a life.

How can I have, what does that mean I have a life? I am life. I am an expression of the one life.

The one consciousness, the Tao, the expressing itself briefly through this form. And the very power of all life is here. Why have some mental structure that gives me a sense of identity that tells me who I am with definitions and judgments and not good enough or better than all kinds.

Unnecessary, unnecessary, sometimes called in the Tao Te Ching, unnecessary baggage. Walking around with unnecessary baggage. My life is so heavy and it's hard.

I have a hard life. Where's your hard life at this moment? Can't see it.

It's only when I start to think about it, it's back, oh yeah. But where is it ever now? It's an imaginary entity, the me that is up there, consisting of all kinds of thoughts and opinions, is an imaginary entity, unreal.

It's wonderful to see that in this moment you don't have that baggage of my life. You are life right now. I don't need to define myself mentally as either good or bad or better than or success or failure.

All that cuts you off from the power that's actually there of the Tao. This is why it says, as we read earlier, empty yourself of everything it said, which means empty yourself of these ideas that otherwise dominate you, the ideas of who you are. Jesus said the same thing, almost literally to me, it means exactly the same.

Blessed are the poor in spirit. Poor in spirit, that means inside you do not carry baggage, the baggage of your thoughts, of who you are. So the same thing, blessed are the poor in spirit, means you are internally unencumbered by heavy thinking and identification and creating an image of who you think you are that becomes my life.

And then you even believe that you could lose your life. I'm going to lose, he lost his life. That must be, there must be, he must have been separate from life.

Who was he if not life? Without life, he isn't. He couldn't have been.

You cannot be, you are life. You can't separate yourself from life and say, I have a life. Who are you then?

Separate from life? What is it other than life? Well, I, that's life.

But you don't have it, you are it. Only the mind tells you that you have it.

[Speaker 6] (5:58:47 - 5:58:48)

Insane.

[Speaker 1] (5:58:48 - 6:09:15)

But normal, normal and insane. One more, he who stands on tiptoe doesn't stand firm. He who rushes ahead doesn't go far.

He who tries to shine dims his own light. He who defines himself can't know who he really is. He who has power over others can't empower himself.

He who clings to his work will create nothing that endures. If you want to accord with a Tao, just do your job, then let go. He who stands on tiptoe doesn't stand firm.

Look at me, me, my life, unhappy or look how miserable I am. Look how great I am. He who rushes ahead doesn't go far, always looking to the next thing.

What do you have to do now? Always grasping for the next, or the next, what's the next thought that I need to worry about? And the next thing, rushing, entire civilization stressed, stressed out, all disconnected from the Tao.

They're all rushing ahead. No time for anything else. No time, no time.

He who rushes ahead doesn't go far. You won't, don't really reach anywhere. He who

tries to shine dims his own light.

By trying to play roles or identifying with yourself as special, look at me, you cut yourself off from the power of the Tao. It's by not, by not directing attention to yourself, the power comes through you. Not identifying with anything, anything that you do, because you don't do it if it's, it's a pity in a way that I wish sometimes, it's a little joke, I wish I had written The Power of Now when I still had a big ego, because now the ego would feel so great, me, me.

But then of course, The Power of Now couldn't have come through the ego. And here, important, he who defines himself can't know who he really is. This is what we were talking about, this constant definitions of who you are in your mind.

Why not just be the consciousness, be the presence right now? That's where the power is. What a wonderful teaching.

Timeless. It helps, of course, to have a translation that makes it more accessible by somebody who was, is deeply in tune with that state of consciousness. Traditionally, the Tao has been always translated by academics, who had a wonderful knowledge and command of ancient Chinese, but absolutely no idea of the spiritual dimension.

The Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end, stillness. We started with it, we end with it, a moment of stillness. From Vince, in The Power of Now and in the New Earth, the way you describe the ego makes it sound like it has a personality of its own.

It seems to be a collection of habits, desires, etc. that run counter to some deeper or more authentic dimension of reality. What are the benefits and potential downsides to describing ego as a personalised entity, rather than, say, as a more impersonal pattern?

The question then, I'll just repeat it or paraphrase it, what is the advantage or the downside of talking about the ego in terms of an entity as if it were a personalised entity, or talking about the ego as simply a collection of impersonal patterns, mental, emotional patterns? And the questioner mentions that I often talk about the ego as if it were an entity in itself. So what are the benefits and potential downsides to talking about it as if it were an entity?

Because these two are just two ways of looking at it. If you look at it in one way, it is like a person, like a being that wants to survive. So this conglomeration of patterns working together, it wants to survive, it has certain needs, so it has certain characteristics of an entity.

And that's why the downside of looking at it as an entity is that it might scare you. You may get scared, you might get scared of your own ego and think there's some demon inside me that wants to take over my life. So that's the downside then, is it creates some kind of emotion around it, and you feel threatened by it.

If you call it, it's a collection of patterns, then you don't have that. But the downside of that is that you may underestimate the force behind it, and the persistence behind the patterns, and the fact that the patterns have a certain organisation to them, they kind of go together, they reinforce each other. So there the downside is that you underestimate the egos.

And you say, well, there's still some unconscious patterns in me, or that's, you probably won't even say that. But anyway, that's, you have the two ways of looking, neither one is the one right way. Another, I can add a third way of looking at the ego, which is to say, it's an illusion.

That's the Eastern approach, in many cases, to say, if the ego is an illusion, or you can even have a saying, the ego doesn't exist, it's just an illusion. And again, everything is a somewhat limited perspective. And every perspective will have, it's helpful, in some ways, maybe helpful, and in other ways, as the questioner says, a downside to it.

So not one perspective really can encapsulate the ego. So you can really have, there's no need to embrace just one perspective, realise that the ego is, it is a personalised entity, it is consisting of a conglomeration of mental emotional patterns, and it is ultimately a dreamlike entity, an illusory form. It's all that together, you could say.

And so that's, then there's also no disagreement between one person saying there is no ego, because it's an illusion, and the other one says, oh, yes, there is, there's just two viewpoints, perspectives. Ego is, of course, the unobserved mind, plus its emotions. Thank you.

[Speaker 4] (6:09:17 - 6:09:39)

A friend of mine got shot and died a couple days ago, so it's been on my mind. What happens at the time of death, and where does the life force go, what is the transformation? Thank you.

[Speaker 1] (6:09:42 - 6:18:22)

Thank you. Well, I haven't gone through physical death yet. As the Zen master who was asked about life after death said, I don't know.

And they said, why don't you know? You're the master. And he said, yeah, but I'm not a dead master.

But I've gone very deeply to what one could call death to identification with form. So in a way, I have gone into that realm, from where I can say and know that ultimately, what we see as death is the dissolution of form, that the eternal in us, which I know that firsthand, cannot be touched by that. So what exactly happens, I would say, depends on whatever state of consciousness you were in, that must be a predominant state of

consciousness in this lifetime.

If in this lifetime, you were continuously identified with form, your body, or the psychological form of me, that means consciousness, this expression of consciousness was still in a somewhat dreamlike state, which is identification with form. And you can easily extrapolate from that if the tendency of consciousness to identify with form was still there, which in other ways, the awakening had not happened. This tendency will continue, there will be further identification with form.

And the process will continue as the consciousness that is not yet fully awake, will continue to identify with form again. And then gradually come to a place where awakening happens. Or, if there has already been a disidentification from form in this lifetime, then you can extrapolate from there that the compulsive urge to identify with form and to seek another form or another cycle of form identification, this compulsion to seek further experiences through identifying with form, then would either be much weaker, or be completely absent, in which case, the consciousness that you are, is no longer bound to this realm, and will not seek to re-experience the realm of form. But in either case, you really, I know, I can tell you that all is well, does not really matter whether this person now needs further experiences of identification, in which case this will happen, or whether he's already free of this urge, in which case, he will move on and live in a realm that we can't even conceive of from where we are here.

I get a sense deep within, in the form of what that is. But we don't need to talk about it here. All we know is nothing, this is the beginning of A Course in Miracles, which is the entire Course in Miracles summarized in two lines.

Nothing real can be threatened. Nothing unreal exists. Herein lies the peace of God.

That which is real in him is beyond form. Anybody can know that when you see a dead body, you realize that this is no longer whom you knew, this is not the being that you knew, this is only a shell. So nothing real can be threatened.

Nothing unreal ultimately exists. This is why sages from all traditions speak of this realm of form as ultimately illusory. It ultimately, it depends what level you look at.

The important thing is all is well. Beyond the appearance on the level of form, which is the only level where death exists, it is the transition from one form into another form or from one form into formlessness. That is what death is.

No more than that. Nothing real dies. Nothing real dies.

Which is to say, ultimately, there is no such thing as death. There only seems to be. It's a transmutation of form.

Either form dissolves, or seeks some other form, some other identification with form.

That for you, of course, to go into stillness in the face of death, to go into stillness is important, to become still within yourself, especially when you are sitting with somebody who is going through the death process, or you are confronted with somebody who has just died next to you. To be with that, immediately close your eyes, go into the deep stillness where you realize who you are.

And once you realize who you are, which is formless consciousness, then you realize also that nothing real died. Nothing real died, which is to say, ultimately, there is no death. It does not mean that you can't feel sad.

You can allow yourself to feel tears and to feel sad, and at the same time, realize that nothing real died. That happened to me when my parents died two years ago within the space of six months, both of them. So to be confronted with the death of a loved one in a short period of time.

Yes, there were tears, and there was sadness. And at the same time, there was the realization that ultimately, there is no death, and who they were in their essence has not been destroyed. Just as I know that I, in my essence, cannot be destroyed.

And so that comes from that. It comes from self-realization or self-knowledge, the realization that the other also is beyond death. So you can have the coexistence of yes, on this level, there is a place for sadness and mourning and tears.

If it happens, it comes in waves, you may have noticed, usually if somebody close to you dies, the sadness comes in waves at you, then you cry, and then it leaves you. And then comes another wave. And even when the wave comes, there can be an undercurrent of peace.

So you're not totally in that emotion, you're not totally consumed by it, it exists there in your own spaciousness. And the spaciousness underneath the emotion is the peace. And it's only from that inner peace that you can realize the truth behind death.

[Speaker 3] (6:18:36 - 6:20:47)

I kind of want to speak about earlier in the week, I was away for a period of time in the fall, and then I came back about a month ago. And I was in Asia in the bright sunshine and, you know, kind of open culture, a lot of sharing of just basic open heartedness. And I mean, I think others have had that experience.

And coming back to Vancouver is kind of rainy and closed down and cold. And, you know, also coming back to North America in the middle of the crisis and the chaos, and also the hope of Obama, like the change, the kind of transition, Bush Obama, but in the middle of all the economy breaking down and stuff. So what I was experiencing in my direct work environment was a lot of, it seemed to me what I was observing was a lot of criticism and fear, you know, anger at different things, entitled behavior, that kind of

thing that we do in North America, very well, I think.

But, you know, so I found myself initially, I was kind of observing it, and then I was like, not wanting to get involved in it. And then, of course, I gradually started getting really involved in it. And it kind of hit me by the beginning of the week is like, I was in a state of protest against the environment, and also against the feelings that were coming up in me, related to the environment.

So I was in, you know, a fair degree of emotional discomfort and stuff. And when I sat with it, and also played what I call Eckhart tapes, like from other retreats and stuff, which I find settled me down. You know, what I saw was this field of alienation, both in myself, and in the environment around me.

So, you know, when I identified, I was feeling, I was identifying the feeling of being alienated, and I was feeling very alienated. And it was somewhat liberating to kind of feel that. And then I could kind of see it.

And then I was more at peace with it, because I had a name for it or something like that. But I wonder if you could generally kind of talk about that. It's like a low level sense of discomfort, of non acceptance of what's going on around.

And it does really feel like one really feels kind of alienated from everything, including one's deeper sense of connection and stuff like that.

[Speaker 1] (6:20:47 - 6:30:48)

Yes, thank you. Yes. Well, what you're describing is most people's normal state of consciousness.

That state of alienation, for most people is so normal, they don't even know it, because they have nothing else to compare it with. But you had just returned, you perhaps were in a more liberated state while you were away in the in Asia. At that time, you felt able to be more present there, perhaps.

So you came back here and then you linked into the collective state of consciousness in the Western Hemisphere. So the state of discontent, latent discontent in the background, and sometimes more acute unhappiness and dissatisfaction in the foreground, is quite normal for almost everybody who is still unawakened. And also still happens to people, even people who are going through the awakening process, often periodically fall back into that state for a while.

So what to do? Well, acceptance is perhaps the key for you. Acceptance of first a reorientation of your conscious attention to this moment, because that's what is.

And then acceptance of whatever is here at this moment in your life, whatever situation

you encounter here. If you want to become free, don't listen to too many media things for a while, so that you become more deeply rooted within first. If you're not deeply rooted in beingness, in the unconditioned consciousness, in the inner stillness, if you're not rooted in there, then even just listening to the news on TV or radio will put you in an unbalanced state, immediately upset about this, and hundreds of things seem to be going wrong in the world.

And then you react to people around you. All that because you're not at home in yourself. So to feel at home in yourself, in the present moment in yourself, to be at ease with yourself requires you to take your attention away from the thinking mind as a conscious choice.

You choose to take your attention away from that, because it's not really the external things that are pulling you out. It's your mind's reaction to the external things. Take attention away.

Breathe. Feel the inner body. Look around.

Accept the form that this moment takes, wherever you are. You might be on a bus. It's raining outside.

It looks gray. The mind would say it looks gray and miserable. But miserable is something supplied by the mind.

It's just gray. It's not gray and miserable. It's just gray.

And the miserable is the mind's interpretation of the weather. But the moment you believe in the thought that the weather is miserable and people around you are looking miserable, you experience certain emotions. This is the body's response to the mental judgments that you totally believe in, and then you feel miserable suddenly, because the weather is miserable, the people around you are miserable, and life is miserable.

And you get trapped in... you hypnotize yourself into that thought pattern, and you experience the corresponding emotions. And once you are trapped in that, whatever situation you go into, and this is how it works, reflects back to you, your state of consciousness.

You find more miserable people. It's not easy, not difficult. And you get into a more miserable situation, and the next day it's miserable again, the weather.

These are the minds. So life is becoming complicated for you because your mind is creating a complexity and judgment, a level of judgments and interpretations that is pulling you out of yourself, and then believing in it, and then believing that you live in a world that is unpleasant. But it's not really that.

It's the mind's activity that's unpleasant, and you believe in it. And then you have the emotions that go with that. So taking your attention away from that, breathe, feel, be, look around, and then next time you're on the bus or in the car, wherever you are, and of course it's the same kind of weather again, around Northwest Pacific for quite a few months, it'll probably be the same, and you suddenly it's no longer miserable.

It's just rain, moisture, the sky is gray, but light is filtering through, no need to judge it. And the person next to you, they might not be smiling, but that's fine. And perhaps when you get off the bus, you smile at them.

There's no judgment. It's fine. You bring a different energy into this world.

Rather than be the victim of this world, which ultimately is really your mind, rather than be the victim, something new comes into this world through you. And so you are the bringer of something new, and rather than reacting to all that, it really is being stuck in your mind. The simplicity of this moment.

And then you gradually feel more rooted in being. Just this. Life is not complicated.

Why? Because the present moment is never complicated. Well, I don't find any complication for yet now.

And the present moment, of course, life is always the present moment. Only that. Only just this moment.

All I need to do is be, allow this moment to be, whatever a person comes into this moment, that's what is. The is-ness or the such-ness of this moment. Become one with that.

No need to judge or to say anything about it. Just it is. Simple.

Very simple. Then you feel you're arriving at yourself. One with yourself.

That's your practice. It's maybe challenging a little bit more challenging here. Some people find it easier in India to be present, or to be spiritual.

Sorry, spiritual. Other people actually can't do it in India. In fact, they're longing to get back and say it's easier at home.

It just depends on your... But India can teach you surrender. That's good.

More than the West, because in the West you expect things to be how they should be. In India you quickly learn that they are not how you demand they should be. The train is not there, or whatever.

And things, you can't plan too much ahead because it's not going to be the way you plan

it. Everybody who goes to India learns that, and people who are then able to surrender suddenly feel much better in India than they feel at home, even though the trains are not arriving on time and so on. But people who can't surrender, for them it's miserable to be there because they have no control anymore over their surroundings.

This shouldn't be happening. That shouldn't be happening. There should be hot water.

I paid for it. Look, no hot water. And then somebody comes, oh, just wait one hour and the hot water will be back.

And then five hours later you're only going, it's still not here. You haven't surrendered yet. And so it doesn't matter where you learn surrender.

You can learn surrender in India, or you can learn surrender on the bus in Vancouver or in Seattle, or you can learn surrender in Detroit or in New York, or Piccadilly Circus in London, wherever you are. There's no reason why you can't be with what is in the now, just that. Thanks.

[Speaker 2] (6:30:53 - 6:50:56)

I learned through my relationship with Eckhart that any and all my ideas I had about what a relationship should be, what my relationship should look like, and how I wanted my relationship to be. It took a lot of looking and some years where I finally realized that I wasn't having a real relationship. I was just having a relationship with an idea in my head.

I wasn't meeting the other and seeing the other, as we can say, as myself or the essence of the other, the essence of Eckhart. But I just had all my expectations and ideas, my imagination, and that's how my relationship, that's how I was relating. And you could only see that in the daily activities, in your daily life.

You can know this, and I knew it on some level, that consciousness, that stillness was not about thought, was not about your ideas. And you can know this, and in a relationship it's not about the idea of a relationship. But that's when the awareness, the inner work needs to be done.

You have to take it beyond the intellectual and then actually then to discover it. So it's the discovery becomes this inner deep knowing that, okay, what I see, what I'm doing, is that I'm not relating with another human being as consciousness, as stillness, but as ego. So when I saw that, and it took many times seeing it, for example, we come from different cultures.

Eckhart is from Germany, even though I'm born in Canada, I'm Chinese, so I had the cultural conditioning of Chinese. We bring to it our own conditioning, and plus being a woman, him a man, the idea, and all that sort of stuff. The era in which Eckhart was

born, the generation in which I was born.

So I have certain expectations that I brought to the relationship. The first one I remember is very close to when Eckhart and I first got together in relationship. And I thought I had to do sort of all the cooking, you know, all the cleaning up and that was my conditioning.

And he didn't have to do anything. And I didn't realize that his conditioning also is that, because he was brought up in Europe, Germany and in Spain, where he had his mother, his stepmother, who did everything. So it was easy for him just to, that was it, you just allow the woman to do it.

At least this was my perception, because he was not doing too much, right? So here I was, and then I was starting to get resentful, like, you know, here I am chopping the vegetables or whatever, or cleaning up, and I'm like, why doesn't he do anything? You know, he's got to do something, you know, like, why do I have to ask?

I shouldn't have to ask. And then suddenly I realized, oh my God, these are all my thoughts in my head, my expectations, instead of just telling him, you know, I don't want to do all the cooking, you know? So I told him that, and he goes, oh, okay, well, you don't have to cook, we'll go out.

I went, oh, okay, so we'll go out. All right. I don't think at that time I didn't really say to him, well, just help me, you know, I just said, okay, okay, we'll go out, because I didn't really like cooking anyways, at least so I thought at that time.

So we went out, and we went out a lot, and then plus we traveled, and we ate out again, so I was feeling more and more unhealthy. And anyways, when we bought a house together over in the island and had this wonderful big kitchen, I found myself cooking, and able to, I liked cooking, I enjoyed it. And I wanted to, we wanted to be at home.

So we came back to the same scenario again, right? We weren't going out to a restaurant, and here I was cooking. But this time I was able to express, to say, you know, I would like some help.

And he would go, okay. But then, you know, several weeks and months would pass, and I'd have to still keep on asking, well, I need some help now. And then I can see it here, just this thought arise in the background, like, oh my god, why is it that I always have to ask him?

It's just like a little kid where I have to, you know, always have to ask a little kid what to do. Why can't he just offer and help? I went, wow, this is what I expect.

I expect him to just help when his nature, his conditioning is that he just doesn't, unless he's asked. So I had to resign and just say, okay, I just have to ask. And it was me that

was stirring up all the angst, all the anxiety, in this thought that I wanted him different than what he is.

So I don't mind now. I just say, okay, time to help. And he'll go, okay.

And he just, he'll help. So, I mean, those are just the superficial things in the relationship, the daily things. Because many people ask me about what my relationship with Eckhart is like, and how wonderful it must be.

And yes, on the level of silence, of stillness, it's absolutely wonderful. I feel like I'm right at home in stillness. We don't have to say a word and can just sense the stillness.

But we have the daily life. And this is where most of us can get caught up in, because you can meet somebody, and you have that wonderful spiritual connection, and you go, ah, this is wonderful. This is great.

And some people are conscious of that spiritual connections and other things that this is just, they don't know about the spiritual end of things, but they just sense something. They just love this person. They want to be with this person, etc.

until you live with them. And it is a working out. It is a giving space to allow them to have their conditioning, because that's, we all have it.

But it's our own job to be aware of what our conditioning is, what our expectations are, and to hear the other, to, okay, what's their conditioning? It took several years before Eckhart would ever really ask me for anything. For example, I learned this when we were in Germany one time, and Eckhart wasn't there.

He decided not to come for dinner, and we went with a group of people to dinner. And one woman said, is your water no good? And I said, yes, it's fine.

And then my friend who sat next to me, who is also German, said, she's really asking you for a sip of water. And I went, she asked me if my water was good, but she didn't ask me for a sip. No, that's how, that's how we ask.

We don't ask directly. And I went, oh my gosh, Eckhart's been doing this to me for years. I thought, you mean he was really asking for a sip of my water, and I never knew it?

So, and I went, okay, I understand. So it is learning each other's own conditioning, and, and seeing how we apply our own conditioning, our own idea of how our relationship or how communication should be when the other has, you know, some other conditioning going on, some other way of being in this world and relating how we relate. And this happens all around the world.

And this is where miscommunication comes in, conflict comes in, because we have all these different ideas. But it's to see and to learn what those ideas, what the

expectations, what that conditioning, what that culture is, is to, is to learn it and not demand that they change and be like yourself. So when I went back to the hotel, and I told Eckhart that, and he went, yeah, yeah, that's right.

And then when I, it's interesting, because when I finally knew and understood what he wanted, he was then be able to, because I was able to communicate, maybe we just didn't know what was going on. I don't know what he thought. Maybe he thought he was totally selfish all this for many years or something.

I don't know. But he was then able to now say, can I have a sip of your water? So it's giving each other that space just to be and watching, learning, listening to hear just exactly what it is that's being communicated.

So it's beautiful that we have these two cultures, German and Chinese, which are very two strong different cultures, and just finding out about it, exploring. However, the basis of our relationship, I think, would not have last. I probably would have walked out a long time ago, because I would have thought he was lazy.

If I didn't have this understanding, and this primary importance of having God, consciousness, stillness, whatever you want to call it, in my life first, and having that be the holder, the container of what the form, in this case, my form in relationship with Eckhart, is, that's the holder. And to realize that whatever form, and it's taken many years to realize that whatever form is going on is not as important as the background, the stillness in which the form is. Emerges, arises, and that's the beauty.

And then when that stillness is there, then the things, the everyday life, yeah, there'll be ups and downs. It's not always great, and it's not always bad. It's, you know, sometimes we got to do things, but it's coming back, always, just to the present moment, to go beyond the conditioning, knowing that it's there, maybe even having the awareness that, yes, you have expectations, but then allowing the expectations to go.

Just let it go, and just see them as that, expectations, and just to live in that stillness, and move, and breathe, and communicate from that place, and just allowing the nature of the other person just to be. I get a kick out of every time when we, because we live on Salt Spring, and we have this recycling thing going on, and we go to the recycling, and we have these containers of, you know, paper, plastic, etc., bottles. And so we have about six, seven containers.

We load up in the truck, and we go. And Eckhart by nature is very, you know, just kind of slow. He just sort of casually just sort of moves and does it, and I'm a little quicker.

So we can go to the recycling, and here we're doing our jobs, and I realize, wow, I've done like five containers, and he's done two. And, you know, it's like, okay, this is, it's okay, it's fine, this is how he is. He just moves a little slower.

I could create a story in my head about it, but I've accepted that, okay, he just, he's with me, and he's doing it, and it's enough. And if I want him to do more in me less than, if I want him to do it in half, I could easily just hop in the car and wait and let him do his half, I suppose. But it's just easier just to, for me, just to do it.

It's there. It's okay. So every relationship goes through just that working out of how everyday life is going to emerge.

We have a unique circumstance, and I think we both really love it, and that is we have, we're fortunate enough to have three places. In Vancouver, we each have our own apartment that is right across from each other, so we have our own space, and then we live part-time together on the island. And some people will think, wow, that's just so weird, and other people think, that's neat.

I think for both of us, at least for me, I love it. I love having my own space. So you find a way to live together.

Now, not everybody is going to have, to be able to afford to have that amount of space, physical space, but it's the working out, it's finding the way, and we need to find that way, respect each other, be able to give that other person the space. I know, just on this awakening process, it requires a lot of space, at least it did for me, a lot of alone time, to search, to look, to be, well, you can say, even in meditation, although I wasn't quite always sitting there in formal meditation, but just being aware, being able to see the mind working and operating in harmony. And how the thoughts just arise, and what kind of those thoughts are, and not, as what Eckhart says, taking your thoughts so seriously, to be able to just, ah, okay, it's not so important.

All my ideas, opinions, expectations, it's not important. And in order to have what we can call a successful relationship, we need to each come to that place to realize, not intellectually, but really internally, inner knowing that yes, the form of this moment is secondary, the primary importance is the space. In which all communication, in which all love, presence, activity flows.

And it's not so much a commitment to the other, but a commitment to your relationship with God, with stillness, and that's the true relationship, is stillness, is God-consciousness. And when you're truly committed to that, then life flows, and shit happens, and it will always happen. And true life is now, it's not what happens, it's the space in which it happens, and that's love.

[Speaker 5] (6:51:04 - 6:52:06)

Just one comment, for the benefit of everybody, is that in the Indian custom, today is the day of the full moon, and on that day, consciousness is enlivened the most, and a lot of knowledge, and energy, and bliss comes from the guru. So you're our guru today, so we

want to thank you for sharing that enlivened consciousness with us. So that's one comment, and I had one question, and that is that in order to maintain the unity and the diversity all the time, would it be advisable to cut down activity and make your life a lot more simple with less belongings?

Because according to Nisargadatta, one of the things he comments is that you should give up pretty much everything in life and maintain as little as possible, and your sole purpose in life should be just enlivenment of your own self and consciousness.

[Speaker 1] (6:52:06 - 8:15:10)

Thank you, thank you. Of course it's true that many people have many superfluous things, they're not only concerned with innumerable things that are ultimately superfluous, they also try to accumulate more and more things that are ultimately superfluous. But the liberation does not lie in whether or not you have things, but it's more important what is your inner relationship to what you have, talking for a moment about things that you possess or acquire.

Another aspect of your question, of course, is things that you do, activities that you are engaged in. We have the two aspects as far as activities are concerned. Many people in our civilization are hyperactive, they are continuously active, they are stressed almost continuously, they are pursuing one thing after another, and they never arrive, there's always the next thing to do, and the next thing, and they're in a hurry with everything.

That's the stress disease of our civilization, and that's a form of madness. That has to be relinquished because it's an insane way to live. Now, people might say, well, I'm going to lose my job if I'm not stressed, or if I don't do what I'm supposed to do, and I cannot do what I'm supposed to do without stress, because there's always deadlines, one deadline after another.

Another aspect of living in our civilization is that you get continuous deadlines for obscure reasons. Publishers say the book has to be out by such and such a date. Why does it have to be out by such and such a date?

Can't you wait until the book is mature and complete? No, no, we have all the things, I don't know what the justifications are, but they always say it has to be out and you need to hurry. It's insane.

And so, many things that our civilization produces are rushed, rushed jobs, one could say. They're not fully matured. Decisions are taken before they even know fully whether, all the facts that involve the decision.

On TV executives, they put on a show and then they look at the, what are the audience numbers, and if it's not high enough, no, take it off, take it off. If they'd given it a chance, it might have developed into something great. Or employees, companies not doing well

say, OK, we have to sack a thousand people, do it now.

But there's no spaciousness at all, there's only rushed decision making, all insane. So, to bring, not to be part of that is essential. Your state of consciousness, you need to, it's not easy living in this world, to say, I'm not going to live in this way.

I will do what is required of me, but I won't be part of the madness. I'll do what I can, I'll do it as well as I can, but I'm not going to live the rest of my life in a state of stress. You just give attention to whatever it is you're doing now and see if you can do it well.

Not looking to the fruit of the action, do it now. Reducing unnecessary activities, but more important than that is reducing the unnecessary mind activity. Because really that's where the whole thing originates.

Because the mind is becoming more and more active, what is being projected is external activity. So, a hyperactive mind produces a hyperactive life. What's the next thought?

What's the next thing really? What's the next thought about what I have to do? And the next thought, so you're rushing after one thought after another, trying to capture this and this and this.

So it goes back to the mind. So it needs to be tackled on the inner level primarily rather than the outer. If you do not come to grips with or bring awareness to your hyperactive mind, there isn't that much you can do on the outer level because you will continuously be driven by the hyperactive mind into all kinds of activities, many of them quite useless.

Even useless, even people who have jobs, they're still doing many things that are quite unnecessary, superfluous, just hyperactive, can't stop doing, have to stop doing, inability to just be. So, reducing the hyperactive mind, slowing that down is of the essence, that's the most important part of it. And then, that will then manifest in your active life so that the hyperactivity will not be there.

You will be actually more effective in what you do, but you'll do fewer things, but you'll do them better than countless things half done because there's not enough time to really do it well. Of course, that's all mind. And that's the dilemma.

Our whole civilization is in that dysfunctional state. So to take yourself out of the dysfunctional state, so to speak, not physically, but internally, is not easy. It's a challenge because you're surrounded by a certain state of consciousness, the collective consciousness that you move in.

So it's your job to be awake enough so that you don't get drawn into that state of consciousness, which really should be called state of unconsciousness, the collective, so that some sanity comes into this world through you. And so, that's the reduction of

activity begins with the reduction of thought in your hyperactive mind. And then, automatically, then that will flow into reduction of activity.

Now we come to the second part. That's to do with things or acquiring things. As some people recommend, you should get rid of as many things as possible in your life.

Now I'm speaking as somebody who has relatively few things, although I have more things now than I ever had before in my life. And that's strange because usually it goes the other way. As you get older, you gradually let go.

But life has been so strange that now I have more material possessions, although not vast amounts, but more than before. I don't feel particularly attached to any one thing. In other words, if it disappeared, it would be okay.

That's fine. So it's not, and I believe not everybody, it's not for everybody to let go of things on the physical level. It's not even necessary.

You need to examine what your inner relationship to the things that surround you is, whether there is an identification with possessions or whether you simply appreciate something beautiful that is in your life without the attachment to it. Or it giving you an enhanced sense of self, as it often is the case. And you need to see whether there is some kind of acquisitive tendency in you that propels you to buy or acquire more and more and more.

Or whether you are simply just happy with what is already there and simply appreciate what's there. Or do you compulsively go to the shopping malls every weekend and look for something to buy to fill up this emptiness you feel inside? And just the action of buying something confirms that you are somebody to the ego.

There's nothing wrong with buying. You can buy something beautiful, but not as an addictive thing, as a compulsive thing. So it's finding a right relationship with the external world, not an addictive relationship, but a free relationship.

The appreciation of nice things is not something that is non-spiritual. It's actually spiritual to appreciate nice things. Whether you call the nice things mine or whether it's not yours, for me sometimes it's enough.

Well, not anymore. When I lived in London, I would sometimes walk around the streets and look in shop windows and love Regent Street or Bond Street and look at the nice things in the window and say, wow, that's beautiful. I neither had the money nor the desire to buy these things.

But I loved it. Now, if I had had the money, I might have bought an occasional thing. It would be nice to have that at home and look at it and feel its presence.

Perhaps it was made with attention and care. Why not appreciate beautiful things? The attachment is what keeps you unconscious.

So I happen to know your home and I know that you are surrounded by beautiful things. And I also believe that although you are surrounded by beautiful things, you don't have an enormous attachment to those things. I can sense that there's a certain spaciousness there between you and that.

There's a simple appreciation of it. And that is fine. Now, if the time comes in your life where you feel from within, the urge comes to leave even that behind.

Although you may not be attached, but at some point in your life it is possible that you may feel, now I want to live in totally simple surroundings. I just want to not have things anymore at all. If it comes, that's fine.

And then you will take action. You might remove yourself or you might give away all the beautiful things that fill up your house and just be in the empty, relatively empty space. Who knows?

If that comes to you at some point, that's fine too. But primarily really is what your inner relationship is to the outer. Welcome to our private seminar.

I'm talking about spiritual awakening in daily life. And some people may not be quite sure what the term spiritual awakening even means. Or they may have strange ideas in their head of what spiritual is, what is spiritual and what is awakening.

And instead of defining right now, I'm just going to talk about spiritual awakening in daily life. And as I talk, what spiritual means and what awakening means will hopefully emerge while we talk. So instead of defining beforehand what these things are, because although this is not a talk on philosophy, so we're not here to define terms, it's an experiential thing.

It's not information-based. We're here to experience something and then to bring that into daily life, live it in our daily existence. Everybody has done some traveling and sightseeing, visited unfamiliar places, European cathedrals perhaps, or the pyramids in Egypt, or Machu Picchu, Stonehenge in England, whatever it may be.

And it's often an interesting experience for me to go into a place and walk around doing some sightseeing. Let's say it's a cathedral, an ancient cathedral in Europe. And you walk in there and usually you have little groups of people with a guide.

They walk around. The guide has now come this way in different languages. The guide explains what this means, when it was built, or who is, this is a tomb, or this king, or whoever lies there, and all kinds of interesting information.

Occasionally when I walk into a place like that, an ancient cathedral, I kind of approach the little group and just listen in and stand at the side and just see what he's saying. Sometimes quite interesting, but I never feel drawn to actually sticking around for very long because I prefer to explore the place by myself without the interference of a voice explaining to me what things are. Now, it may well be that I may have read a guidebook beforehand, or I may not.

In most cases, probably, I have not looked at a guidebook beforehand. So I'm actually going into this, let's say it's a medieval cathedral. I'm walking into this medieval cathedral not knowing very much about it, except it was built a thousand years ago, whatever, and it took two or three hundred years to build.

But I prefer that experience of entering a space and not being burdened by information about it, rather than entering a space and immediately being bombarded with facts about it. There are two very different kinds of experiencing that place. One kind of experiencing that place is based on bits and pieces of information, on knowledge, on mental knowledge, on mind.

And this is why most people travel for that reason, because they want to learn new things. So as soon as they enter the cathedral, they say, OK, I'm going to join this guided tour. Or, these days, I have invented something to substitute the human guide.

You can rent a little device recording with earphones, and you can choose your language, and you put it on your ears, and then you choose your language, and then it tells you where to go. Now turn right here, stop here, and then it starts explaining it. You look, and you're continuously learning a lot.

And then, OK, walk on now ten steps, and now look up to the left, and you will see more information, information coming in. Very interesting, learning so much about history. It's true, you are.

You're learning a lot. And so you walk around this cathedral with the voice in your head, teaching you about it. What's wrong with that?

Nothing. It's fine. Why don't I do that?

Because there is another way of experiencing, of perceiving that place. And that's not something that people even know about. Some people do it intuitively.

And that way is going into that place, and not perceive whatever is around you through the veil of facts, information, knowledge, thoughts. Ultimately, it all comes down through thoughts, one thought after another. There is another way of perceiving that place that is not based on mind activity.

And I love that other way more than the way of learning about. There's nothing wrong

with that. Sometimes I read a guidebook afterwards, after I've been to a place like that.

I read, oh, that's what I saw, and have a little bit of information about it. But at first, I love entering that place and perceiving, first of all, the totality of this, the vast, let's say it's a cathedral, it could be other places, but there's always, there's a spaciousness there, there's a vastness, there's a silence, interrupted, of course, sometimes by the voice of the guides here and there, and the clicking of cameras, but there is still a vastness, a silence, there's a, the whole place has a presence.

There's an energy field there. And the first thing that I love to take in is to enter and to take in the totality of that energy field that is this ancient cathedral, to sense it, to feel it directly. And there's a, it has its own presence, it's an energy field.

I like to get in touch with this ancient energy field, ancient and new, because it's still alive. And then look around at this architecture, and so on, and again, just see the shapes, the forms, the colors. So you see, be aware also of the space itself, because anybody who goes into a place like that and is struck by something, they go, wow.

Even people who later seek out the guide, there may be a few seconds when they take in this and go, they sense something, a sacred presence, you could almost say, they sense it, they don't need to know anything about it. In fact, you cannot sense the presence of that place if your mind is full of thoughts, full of knowledge. And if you enter a cathedral and you are, let's say, you are already very knowledgeable, you're a historian or whatever, and you know much, you would have to let go for a moment of all that you know, if you truly wanted to experience that place.

And I always feel a little bit sorry for most tourists, because they don't seem to be aware that there is another way of experiencing life, there is another way of perceiving, other than the mind, through the mind only. There's nothing wrong with the mind, it has its place, and it's needed for quite a few things in your daily life. But for many other things, for realising the depths of life and becoming a deep person, it's a strange expression, it's sometimes used, you say, this person has a depth, or we speak of a depth of perception.

What does that mean for a person? You would say there's a shallow person, and there's a deep person. What does that mean?

I would say it means what we might call a shallow person is a person who is totally trapped only in the mind activity, the knowledge accumulated by the mind, and perceives everything through thoughts. In other words, you walk around your life like the tourist who rents this little device and tells him comments about what they are perceiving continuously, that's fine, sometimes it may be necessary, but imagine going through life not being able to get rid of that device. You can't take it off anymore, it keeps commenting, so wherever you go in the street, it says, look at that person, and the thing even tells you whether you like it or not.

I like that, or I don't like that, I wish I had an answer on whatever, and of course, this is how most people live, because they are so identified with the involuntary mind activity, the little voice in the head, they don't even know it, they think they are the voice. And to live through the voice then makes your life quite shallow, because whatever you experience lacks depth, you experience it through a concept, every thought is conceptual. So when, let's say, you are in the street, a man or woman comes towards you, and your mind immediately has to say something about whether you like or don't like, or would like to do something with this person, whatever it may be, or have some kind of reference point, or commenting on the way they look, weird or strange, or nice, or I'd love to, whatever.

Is there another way of perceiving this human being? Yes. To perceive the human being in the same way, if that's what I said about the cathedral, if that resonates with you, if you have had a glimpse of that experience, or perhaps more than a glimpse, then you know the difference between stepping into a place and going, no comment, well, perhaps the mind says, oh, this is so beautiful, and then there's this stillness again.

So there is a still space through which you perceive instead of concepts through which you perceive. And suddenly, there is a depth, not only you feel another dimension is suddenly present, not only outside of you, another dimension that the tourist, who is totally dependent on either the mechanical guide or the human guide, is not aware of that. The tourist, who only listens to the commentary, misses the true aliveness, the sacredness, and the depth of that place.

And so, also within, you are trapped in the head, there's no depth then to you as a human being. There's something that responds to life, something deeper than the commentary in your head. And so many people these days are trapped then with this guide, the tourist guide they can't get rid of, and it's called your mind.

And so, not that the mind is not a useful tool, and even in the cathedral, it sometimes, it adds a little bit to it, if you know something about it, and I would say that's the second stage, to come back just for a moment to this cathedral analogy, one could almost say. You come back to that, of course, ideally, and I do that occasionally, but sometimes we don't have enough time when we travel. First, I love to experience the place without knowing anything, and truly experience it, the depth of it.

And then, perhaps, go back to the hotel room, and then look at a guidebook, and then learn a few facts about it. Could be quite helpful. And then go back the next day, look at it again, and then you have a balance between knowing things about it, and still being able to experience it.

So, in other words, you have then some information in your head, it's, oh, this is, I read about that, it was built by such and such, and then whatever, and then again you have the spaciousness that you perceive. And then you look at something else, and you, oh,

this is a statue of the saint so and so, and some knowledge about it that you might have overlooked, a little detail, you can actually see a tear coming out of his eye or whatever. Oh yeah, there's a tear, he seems to be crying, don't know why, but it seems to be.

And then again, you can take it in without the commentary. So that's a little, you can experiment with that. And so, I'm using that almost as just an analogy for the whole of your life.

Most people are stuck with the tourist guide in their head. It comments continuously of what's going on in your life, and evaluates and interprets and defines in words everything that you perceive. And so, in whatever way it is defined or interpreted depends on your particular conditioning, on the way you were brought up, what you were taught by the surrounding culture and so on.

So the kind of tourist guide you have depends on your past. And so it's really your past talking to you continuously, certain forms of conditioning from your culture, your education, your family background, what you have read. Your fears and ambitions are also expressed there as thought structures.

They just become thoughts, what you would like, want, what you fear. What if that happens? Oh my God, this could go wrong.

What if? Of course, so it becomes very problematic because the voice doesn't stop talking. Except occasional moments when you suddenly feel a heightened sense of aliveness.

Perhaps you're out in nature and you're looking at a tree or a forest. And for a moment you say, wow. And then after a few seconds the mind says, that's beautiful.

But for about 10 seconds or 20 seconds the mind wasn't saying anything. And that's the reason that you can know that it's beautiful. Beautiful is not, the mind cannot really, the mind is concepts.

There's no beauty really in that. If something from within you responds to beauty in nature, for a moment there must have been a space where the tourist guide in the head stopped talking. And in that space there is a deeper experiencing of whatever is there.

There's a depth to your experience. What does that mean? It means, yes, what you see is the same.

But the state of consciousness through which you see it has deepened. A space has opened up inside you through which the perception happens. And that's the depth.

So you could say, when you look at something and for a moment you're not interpreting what you see. There's just the seeing. And you may be aware of the background to what

you see.

Which cannot be defined. But there's a stillness inside while you perceive. This is what I meant when I talked about entering a cathedral without the knowledge in your head.

So suddenly the mind has become still and the perception happens. So you have two dimensions. You have a stillness in the background and whatever is going on outside is there.

The stillness is the depth that changes your perceptions. Then you see that the tree also has a depth to it and an aliveness and a sacredness that you didn't know before. When you were conceptualizing the tree and said, oh, that's such and such a tree and whatever knowledge you have.

Or this tree is in my grandmother's garden too. Or I'd like to chop this tree up and use it as my Christmas tree. Or I wonder how much it would be worth the timber if I cut it.

How much the timber would be worth. The tree is a surface phenomenon when you're in that state of consciousness. A utilitarian surface phenomenon.

You cannot sense the depth, the aliveness, the sacredness of the tree. And I'm only using tree as one of many possible examples. Life really.

The tree stands for life. It could be a human being. You cannot sense the aliveness of that if you are totally trapped in conceptualization in your head.

So there needs to be a depth to you in order to recognize that there is also a depth in life. Otherwise you walk around for the rest of your life skimming the surface of life. Just every human being is a surface phenomenon because you just have judgments about them.

Whatever you see is just no depth. And then you can go into nature and even there you will not know that nature has a sacredness to it. Because you can't sense it.

Because the space isn't there inside you to sense that when you go into a forest, an ancient forest, you've been there for thousands of years, and you cannot sense that that is a sacred space. Because otherwise you would go, wow. And then you would...

And if you don't know it's sacred and our civilization doesn't know, it looks at the forest as a utilitarian thing. How much would it be worth? So the people who cut down the ancient forests, they don't know what they are doing because they cannot sense that there is more there than what appears to be there on the surface of things.

But since they themselves are trapped in the surface of their own mind only, they have no idea what they are doing when they log an ancient forest. To them it's just a utilitarian thing. You talk to them and say, what are you talking about?

We are going to plant trees again. Yeah, but it will take a thousand years to reach that sacredness. No idea what you say sacredness, what do you mean?

It's a tree. We are harvesting the trees. And this is one example of what happens when you cannot get out of the conceptualizing mind.

Life has no depth anymore. And getting out of the conceptualizing mind is what I call spiritual awakening. So spiritual awakening has nothing to do with some kind of, suddenly you have new spiritual thoughts in your head and you start talking about angels or even God.

You suddenly start talking about God all the time and then people say, oh he has become spiritual. No he hasn't, he has become religious. Religious without spiritual is an ideology.

You could be a communist and then talk in those terms, whatever, it's an ideology. Sometimes religious and spiritual can go together, but in many cases religious only is just more thoughts in your head, but different kinds of thoughts. Then God of course becomes my God and your God is not the right one.

And then you become my enemy and I will conceptualize you as the non-believer, for example. And the non-believers are evil, another concept. The non-believers must be killed because we know the truth.

And the truth is our God, concepts in the mind. You can no longer sense, and then when you do kill somebody, you are not killing a human being because you cannot sense that there is a being there, another human being. You are killing, there is a mental concept there.

You have conceptualized, you have deadened, just as you have deadened the forest to yourself, you have deadened the other human being. You put some label on, non-believer, American. And so it's not a human being, it's American.

This is how the madness grows. So, and of course they don't know what's happened to them. They don't realize what's happening.

They are unconscious, and not unconscious in the conventional sense of the word because unconscious in the conventional sense of the word means they're lying there. No, not that unconscious. They seem to be very conscious, seem to be very alert with their guns or whatever they're doing.

But they are unconscious because they are totally trapped in the conceptualizing mind. They no longer sense the aliveness of life. They have deadened themselves.

They don't know who they are beyond the conceptualizing mind where they are

completely identified with their belief structures that gives them, the belief structures give them their identity, their sense of who they are. I am a, whatever label they have. We are, we, we are, the only true, etc, etc.

And then it's the others, it's the others, them, they're not alive. They're just, they're concepts. So it's easy to, when you no longer sense what you're doing, to kill another human becomes easy because you no longer know that the human, the depths of the human being has disappeared.

And that's perhaps why Jesus on the cross said, they know not, forgive them for they know not what they do. In other words, they are unconscious. They have not awakened.

And so we are coming here from the tourists, going into a cathedral, and we've arrived at terrorists. Just an extension of really what is considered a normal state of consciousness. And what it does to you to be trapped in that your whole life is a dreadful fate.

And the reason why we are on this planet, why we have arrived at such a point of extreme crisis is that this state of consciousness that we have been trapped in for thousands of years has created and is creating increasing havoc and destruction. It destroys nature. It destroys human beings, destroying each other.

What we do externally is always a reflection of the predominant collective state of consciousness. And if you read the 20th century history, you see what human beings have done to each other. The only conclusion you can reach is they are mad.

It's quite mad. And 20th century is just the most extreme form of that madness where human beings kill each other by the millions. Often they don't even know what for.

In the end you don't even know anymore what the whole thing is for. The First World War. What was that whole thing about?

And then the First World War led to the Second World War and so on. And innumerable other wars. So the spiritual awakening then is for the planet or humanity to survive is an absolute necessity.

So having realized then that what is needed is to awaken out of complete identification with the continuous stream of thinking in your mind. Okay, well, how do we do that? Simple first step.

Is to realize that there is a continuous stream of thoughts in your mind. This is the first step of awakening. It's not saying I shouldn't be thinking.

No, the first step is to realize that there is a voice that talks most of the time inside you. And perhaps that until now you had been so identified with the voice that that was you.

You were talking to yourself.

Sometimes people talk to themselves as I. Sometimes people talk to themselves as you. You have a little voice that says you should have done that.

Why didn't you do that? The voice is talking to some other voice. And then perhaps there is an answer.

Well, I couldn't help it. Yeah, but you should have. So sometimes the voice splits itself into different voices talking to each other.

Becomes even more mad. And sometimes the voice also can have certain streams that one stream of the voice only comes up in certain circumstances. What some psychologists, they have discovered that this is the case.

Some psychologists call it sub-personalities. So in certain circumstances, perhaps a whining little girl suddenly comes up. But you're 30 years old.

Why are you still? It's a sub-personality. And suddenly you have a whining voice in your head that talks about how unfair life is treating me.

It's a sub-personality talking. And then when that subsides, something else happens. And another voice suddenly comes in and becomes extremely aggressive.

Another stream, another aspect of that has arisen. And so sometimes different voices take over. But really, it all belongs ultimately to the one thing, the one voice in your head.

So the first step to awakening, the beginning of awakening, is to realize there's a voice in my head. And it's especially useful to realize in the moment of it saying, for example, voices have most of the mind activities, old thoughts, old patterns, repetitive thoughts. For example, when I was younger, I had a frequent thought that said, whenever something that wasn't good happened to me, or that my mind interpreted as not good, the voice in my head would say, you see, bad things always happen to you.

And then I was just waiting for the next bad thing to confirm that I was right. And it would never have to wait for very long, and something else would go wrong in my life, and I would say, you see, it's happening again. Always bad things to you.

I don't know why it's always to you. And then of course you experience the emotion that goes with that kind of thought. And I completely believed in that thought.

I was so identified with that thought, I didn't realize this is just a thought in my head. It's not the reality. It's a conditioned way of interpreting the phenomenal world, the world outside you.

And so the liberation then comes with beginning to realize, oh, the voice is saying the same thing again, and again, and again, and it's not me. It's the voice. Who realizes that?

You. So there is a deeper dimension is suddenly there, and you become aware that all the stuff that your mind is saying to you and to others, is not ultimately who you are. But the awareness that at this moment your mind is reproducing the same old thoughts, there you're beginning to touch the depth that is within yourself, that we could call the awareness, the aware presence.

Because knowing that there is thought in my head is not a thought, it's just a looking, an internal aware, why do bad things always happen to me? And then you look at the thought, and you realize the thought. So you begin to, one could almost say you listen to your thoughts, you become aware of the kinds of thoughts you think, and when, this is for many people the first awakening.

And what people realize when they first awaken, not everybody, because some people's thoughts are not too bad, they can live with it quite well, they saw their thought activity is not predominantly negative, but many people actually find that when they become aware of their thoughts, they realize how many thoughts are actually negative. The majority of people become aware that the larger part of your mind activity is negative thoughts. There are far more negative thoughts than positive thoughts.

Not in everybody, some people have quite a few positive thoughts. One could almost say it's easier for people who are trapped in a lot of negative thinking to step out of their thinking than people who have relatively nice thoughts. Their inner urge to awaken is not as strong.

If you live in a self-made nightmare, as I did, the impulse to awaken is much stronger. Then you really, I can't stand my mind anymore. I don't want to live with this mind anymore.

Oh, that's good. It doesn't mean you have to kill yourself. It just means you have to realize that your mind is not who you are.

You are the awareness behind your mind. You are the space because the awareness is space. It's not a thought.

It's consciousness. So there's a depth of consciousness to you of which the thought activity is only like little ripples. You could say there's a vast ocean or lake very deep on the surface and the waves and ripples on the surface are the thoughts in your head.

And so most people are trapped on that level. They don't realize that there is a depth underneath that that is vast and that if they ever wanted to become creative human beings or bring anything new into this world it would have to come from the depth. It

can't come from just the surface activity of your mind.

It's repetitive continuously the same kind of thing. Nothing creative can ever happen on that level alone. One day I'm going to compose a great piece of music.

One day I'm going to write a great book. Well, not if you don't get out of that. Of course the mind is needed to write a book, yes.

But you cannot have a deep or inspired thought if you don't make room a moment for the depth inside you so that you touch something deeper. You need to become still for a moment when you sit in front of your computer or piece or notepad and want to write something new and creative, bring something new into this world. Well, where does that come from?

From the repetitive noise in your head? No, it comes if for a moment the repetitive noise in your head subsides. It's the moment of stepping out.

And then you wait. So there is a... Open yourself to the stillness inside.

It's there. You don't have to make yourself still. Underneath, even in the most mad, the maddest person, underneath that there is the realm of stillness.

They just can't touch it. It's there. So it's very easy to actually embrace that you don't need to think all the time.

You need to have spaces of no thought and it's not that difficult unless you're totally mad. But not that many people are totally mad. Most people are partially mad.

And the madness comes up occasionally in a more acute form. It's there. So can you walk into the cathedral and be there rather than a mind burdened with knowledge?

Can you walk along the street and look at another human being without commenting? Just look and sense. When there's no commenting you can sense there's an aliveness in the other human being.

There's an essence there that is even deeper than your mind and deeper than their mind. And if you then communicate while you, for example, while you listen to them can you be still inside while you listen? You might be talking about the weather.

It doesn't matter. But be still and just be there as the space for that human being as you are there at the space as the space for the tree and realise what an incredible phenomenon this tree is. You can capture it through the mind.

What you know may be useful for certain things but there's a depth to that thing that we call tree that you cannot capture through that but you can sense something and the more you sense it outside the deeper you go within and there is an even greater depth in

another human being. And the more you sense the depth of aliveness in another human being the more you sense it in yourself. Relationships become problematic if both parties are totally trapped in their noise-making mind.

Then very quickly conflict arises in relationships and that's why relationships are full of conflict because people can't get out of that. They are trapped in here so every discussion when they disagree becomes conflict. You have an opinion this is how it is I'm right.

You identify with your mental position your partner has a different mental position no, you're not I'm right. You identify with your opinion. Identify means your sense of self is in the thought that you have in your mental position of this is how it is today it's cold.

Your partner says no, it's not cold it's just mild. No, it's cold. I'm just giving an oversimplified example.

Even that could lead to an argument because are you accusing me of being a liar? Or moving in concepts. Well, you did lie last week didn't you?

I wasn't lying I was just and it goes on and on and it's all happening the entire relationship is mind mind against mind so you identify with mind and that becomes the ego the me that needs to be right always because if the ego is wrong it's death thinks I'm dead I'll die can't be wrong need to defend my position dreadful fate but it's normal so we're now slowly getting to what spiritual awakening is because we've looked at what spiritual sleep is we've seen what it means to be asleep or unconscious normal in other words normal existence the entire world not the entire world there's some awakening here and there more and more people in fact are awakening going through the awakening process we now know what that is because it means you're no longer identified with the mind who are you if you're not your mind?

you are the consciousness out of which every thought comes and then it plops back it's like a wave or ripple you are the consciousness that is far greater than any single thought or even greater than the totality of thought and that consciousness is experienced touch it as inner stillness stillness doesn't mean you go to sleep it means where the mind was before there's a space and out of that space comes all creativity every great realisation or insight that any human being has ever had the creative impulse comes out of the vast intelligence that is there and then it flows into the mind and there's an instrument for that and that's how the mind can be a beautiful thing when it's not just self-serving but it is serving something greater than itself the mind as a master is mad the mind as a servant is a great thing so that's the shift in consciousness that is happening and needs to happen on this planet the mind finds its place as the servant of consciousness or awareness so it's up to you then to invite the consciousness that you are beyond the mind into your daily life and how do you do that? you do that by inviting space, inner space or inner stillness into your life make a cup of tea or coffee

why not try to practice being still with every movement just be aware bring awareness into that every movement pour the water no commentary look at a flower look at a tree look at the sky and for just a few seconds just look listen to whatever sound you can hear and just listen bring the attention to sense perceptions attention to sense perceptions that means the mind is quiet while you listen the mind is quiet while you look and that's a little practice that you can do many times during the day and it will deepen your life and in daily existence it goes from one thing that you have to do to another thing you have to do and another thing you have to think about now then there's no gaps so the gaps are vital in daily life inviting gaps into your daily existence looking for the gaps in daily existence in everyday situations a helpful thing as many of you already know is that that your body is actually alive inside normally people are not aware of that because their whole attention is on thought activity but if you can feel that your body is alive so the attention is some attention can be in the energy field of your hands and you feel yes I feel alive there is an aliveness in your body your body is full of life but most people can't feel that so if you can feel the inner body that you are alive inside the entire body at this very moment is a vibrating alive energy field and it actually feels good to have some of your attention there even while you're looking around the room you can just for people people who are new to this can just start by doing it with their hands feel the aliveness that's in your hands you can feel it perhaps even more with your eyes closed and then you can still feel it even when your eyes are open simultaneous thing you are present inside your body and you are present outside in your sense perceptions what does that do?

it means your mind becomes quite still because you can't be thinking because you are already present in the body and you are present outside you become awake really awake to this moment then and your mind there is not enough attention left then for thinking part of your attention is in the inner body and part of your attention is on your perceptions and what you perceive then is more alive than it was before it's more surprising there is more depth to it every human being is more interesting then more really there new you no longer feel that you are experiencing the same old thing again and again life then is always new every day is a new day it's not a repetition as people grow older they reach 30 years 40 years, 50 years life becomes more and more boring because it's so repetitive and they no longer look anywhere they go every day they go to work the same place they don't look at anything anymore there is nothing to look at I looked at it yesterday and last year and 5 years ago what's there to look at? and even people they live with for a few years after a few years you don't look at your wife you don't look at your paintings anymore on the wall because they have been there for too long you can't look it's their old and really nothing new and then you become that kind of person who says I've seen it all don't tell me about it I know it all I've had enough you're not there and you're not and so that's the that's the fate of many people as they grow old in our civilization and only a few perhaps an increasing number now because more and more people are awakening spiritually they remain alive perhaps even become more

alive as they grow older and slowly and then the person doesn't actually even if they are 70, 80 years old you don't get the impression that they are old people because there is a light shining through their eyes there is an aliveness to them and occasionally you meet people like that they may be old in terms of calendar years but they are not old inside because they are being used but they are no longer being used by their mind which says I already know all this and so every day is new and fresh and every moment is still alive because you're not putting your past you're not obscuring it with past the accumulated past in your head putting it onto the aliveness of the present moment stifling the aliveness and then spiritual awakening is then essentially intrinsically connected with the aliveness of the present moment the only place where life is and so you are more and more open to the now rather than live continuously in past and future which is normal for most people it's future there's not much future left and then they live mostly in the past that's why old people many old people continuously talk about the past and the younger people continuously think about their future where they're going to finally make it someday and find fulfillment in some future when they have done or achieved this whatever it may be it could be a big house for recognition or for spiritually inclined people it could be enlightenment but it's put into the future I'm going to reach that place and then I'll be finally fully myself fulfilled, happy alive I will become alive one day fully alive but without ten million dollars in the bank I don't think I can feel alive because I really need to have that sense of security I need the sense of security without which I'll just be in fear the way I've always been and you'll be surprised if ten million dollars happen to come to you for a few weeks you will feel alive and one night you'll wake up and you'll be in the same fear as before because the stock market is about to collapse so spiritual awakening is becoming awake to the aliveness of this moment and becoming awake to the aliveness of this moment the all there ever is nothing else is ever going to come you can wait for millions of years if you lived that long nothing is ever going to come that's not this moment your life will always be this moment and that sounds well we know that no you don't if you don't live it you don't know it life is always this moment you don't know this if you don't live it it's only through living it that you know it otherwise it's just a concept in your head yeah of course life is always this moment and then what's next where's the next moment so you might as well become friendly with this moment if there's nothing else be open to that don't stifle it with an excessive amount of judgments and interpretations and definitions but be open to the aliveness of this moment open means there's spaciousness here so the shift is from a thought based entity which is the normal old way for humans been for thousands of years to a deeper entity that is based in awareness or presence consciousness so because when you're not commenting on things obsessively who are you when you're not continuously thinking about me and my problems at this very moment let's say pretend that you don't remember your past at this moment in fact you don't because at this moment unless you start a thought process at this moment now but pretend for a moment actually there's there is no past and there's no future what's left of you if I removed your past and your future from you now what's left I remember nothing what's left I don't remember my

name who are you I don't know yes there is something there but I can't say what it is that's who you are consciousness itself when you remove the content from consciousness for a while then you realize that you are consciousness when the content content is thoughts and emotions and thoughts and thoughts when the content comes back it obscures the reality that you are consciousness and you identify with content and you have been able to awaken spiritually because life took away their content they lost everything suddenly they lost their reputation in other words their name it happens sometimes that life does these things to people they lost their money their possessions they lost even their family they suddenly were killed in an accident a big earthquake came everything lost and they sit there and they suddenly had a deep spiritual awakening why?

because life took away all the things they had identified with as themselves as the me and what was left was what we just did now here when I asked you to pretend that there is no past and future we took away for a moment content from your life and when you remove content it's not permanent whatever content you have is impermanent in your life things come and go or as the Buddha says it's impermanence is the word transient everything is transient and that refers to content so as long as you are identified with all the content in your life that can go very quickly even your body can go very quickly but if you just beyond content is consciousness itself rather than what consciousness has identified with and you are that I am that you and I on that level are the same we are in essence nothing else is added temporarily it's a disguise consciousness disguising itself as this and that and that person appearing in this particular form that's the play lila, the divine play of life as it's called in India and that's fine the play is not to be rejected but you can only enjoy the play of life if you know what is beyond phenomenal existence so it's only if you know who you are beyond all the things in your life you can actually truly enjoy the things in your life while they last and you don't need to cling because you know nothing is going to last relationships whatever it's only very young people when you realize so many things have evaporated that I thought were permanent and more things are going to evaporate and a few more things are going to come and then evaporate so not to live your life is no longer content based but essence based I'm giving you here in one little talk the essence of what spirituality really is all about and that's really that's what it is there's not much else that you need to know beyond that in the sense of knowledge accumulated knowledge it is now a question of living that and if you don't want to live it that's fine it means you have to suffer a bit more to make this shift until the shift begins to happen a human being needs to reach the point of readiness where they say ok, I've done enough madness I've suffered enough I'm ready for the shift I'm ready to say ok this moment is all there ever is I might as well become friendly with it acknowledge it give it attention in whatever form it comes because the form is not the moment it's the form that this moment takes the now it's not what happens the now is not what happens it's the space in which it happens and essentially that space is consciousness everything happens in the light of consciousness you can say as some

philosophers have done they question everything some philosophers have said is there anything I can be absolutely sure of because everything can be doubted I can doubt that you exist you can doubt that I exist it could be a dream who says we are not dreaming right now who says that us sitting here is not a dream you cannot know for sure but even if it is a dream there must be something real there because the dream must appear to something or someone there must be a light in which the dream appears a space in which the dream happens so even if it is a dream the one thing you cannot question is the fact of being itself being is the being may be a dream or it may not be a dream but one thing you can be certain of I am is something that cannot be doubted if I am dreaming that I am it is still the essence of I am is still there in the dream then and that is an amazing thing to realise there is one thing that is beyond doubt and that is I am it is not as the philosopher Descartes said I think therefore I am he confused consciousness with thinking perhaps because he was always thinking so he couldn't stop thinking and then he said if I can't stop thinking then the essence of who I am must be thinking I think therefore I know that I am he stopped too soon he should have taken one more step and realised that beyond thinking there is consciousness and then realised because I am conscious I am because there is consciousness I am I am that consciousness and that consciousness that people believe in our civilisation that the consciousness is a by-product of chemical reactions in the brain and many psychologists or scientists actually doubt that there is such a thing as consciousness they say no there is no consciousness it is just a chemical soup but they do recognise that the brain is the most complex thing on the planet and they understand a tiny fraction of it only so who built that incredibly complex thing through which consciousness comes if not consciousness so consciousness is prior to whatever appears here and what is the relationship between the brain and consciousness and some scientists are beginning to say they recognise the possibility that consciousness may be all pervasive throughout the universe and the brain is like a lens through which consciousness enters this dimension so it is like a receiver it reduces and receives consciousness so when you eliminate the brain you eliminate the receiver like a TV you can smash the TV and suddenly the image disappears but the TV didn't produce the image so that is our meditation I am consciousness not something to believe in but we are using those words only as a pointer to the essence of who you are thank you

[Speaker 3] (8:15:16 - 8:15:32)

there was a quote where you were discussing people's food choices and how that is connected maybe to their spirituality and I am wondering if you can elaborate on how that is connected especially concerning Ahimsa

[Speaker 1] (8:15:33 - 8:19:29)

thank you I would say I have never as I never do to tell people you should do this and then the right food choice will happen for you rather than giving an abstract guideline it

needs to come from within rather than as something from without so if you are vegetarian that is wonderful it doesn't mean it immediately makes you into a person who is spiritual you could be egoically identified with being vegetarian in which case so I shocked a vegetarian once when I said did you know that Hitler was a vegetarian that person was very strongly identified with the mental image of me as a spiritually evolved vegetarian and so yes he was a vegetarian I don't know why he was a vegetarian perhaps I don't know I haven't read about it but I know that whenever people around Hitler were eating chicken soup so he said condescendingly so you are eating dead bird soup so it really is it comes from within you and you have to do what feels right what corresponds to your state of consciousness at any time when you go into when you even look at food or even think of food it is helpful to sometimes when I buy some food I go into a supermarket and I look at the shelf I imagine that this is going into my body and that opens up to it or closes down and so if you are in touch with the body then that is quite helpful it makes it easier the mind often doesn't really know what the body really wants the mind remembers some past pleasure and wants to repeat it and that is where overeating also occurs because it is just overeating is on the physical level the need to fill a sense of insufficiency that is ultimately there on the psychological, spiritual level the sense of not enough is ego the ego lives from that sense of insufficiency of not enough and of needing more and for some people that comes into the physical realm in which case you eat more than the body really needs or wants and again it is a spiritual dilemma and can only be ultimately transcended if you realize that you are not that needy entity that says I need more so body awareness helps a lot in food choice that is what it is that you feel and you will know you will not be in a dilemma you will know what is right for you and so this is all important answers need to come from within you

[Speaker 4] (8:19:40 - 8:20:11)

I understand how you can be in the moment and when it is a calm peaceful moment it is much easier for prolonged psychic or physical pain what is the process by which they learn to find some kind of stillness within that when it is so all consuming what they desire is for it to pass more than anything else

[Speaker 1] (8:20:11 - 8:28:44)

yes thank you sometimes people just know they haven't heard of the possibility of acceptance of what is they are still the largest part of the population of our planet is not even aware that such a possibility exists that you can accept a situation that usually would be called unacceptable and so a person really either it happens spontaneously there is a letting go of inner resistance because you cannot stand the pain anymore and very often the large part of the pain is the resistance to whatever is the case a large part of the pain is the psychological pain that says this is dreadful the last few years of my mother for example she was occasionally I was able to bring her into stillness but very quickly she was drawn out again by her mind and 90% of her suffering which was

intense the last 2 or 3 years of her life 90% of her suffering was psychological yes her body was no longer working normally she found it increasingly difficult to walk then she had to walk with the help of this device a walker and then her eyesight was beginning to fail so those but she she did not have physical pain but she had physical discomfort and it became increasingly difficult to move from here to there by herself that in itself would have been yes not pleasant perhaps it would have been uncomfortable the eyesight failing yes you can't see very clearly anymore but that you can live with what you cannot live with is the enormous amount of psychological suffering that then she generated unconsciously for herself which said what if I go blind completely and she spent hours and hours in terror at this thought of going blind completely what if I won't even be able to walk anymore and so she spent many more hours thinking what if I'm going to spend my last few years in bed and I can't go to the bathroom by myself anymore what if that happens to me because that seems to be the way I'm going enormous amount of suffering and again I tried again and again to say if this is not what is now is just this what you're experiencing now is just this for brief moments she got it and she was free of the what if extrapolation of what if this continues a further area of suffering was since she had always been identified with her external appearance what are people going to think of me now they see me walking with this walker she must be dreadful for somebody to whom other people's opinion had always been very important so there was an enormous amount of psychological suffering there also so she was every day was consumed in intense psychological suffering so very often a large part of the suffering is psychic psychological emotional suffering generated unconsciously by the mind and then there is the actual physical suffering at times that is there in the form of pain or in the form of extreme discomfort or in the form of weakness the message is there is a way of going beyond unnecessary suffering which really is to say of going beyond all suffering because suffering is the way we use the term here suffering is the superstructure on top of what is the mind created baggage there is a way of being free of that so but not everybody is ready to hear this or those who hear this message which is in essence a spiritual message but not everybody is yet open to this spiritual message there are some people who don't even need this spiritual message to whom the realization of letting go comes spontaneously that happened to me so it came because the suffering the psychological suffering became so intense there had to be a letting go otherwise I would have had to kill myself there had to be a letting go and some the intelligence the greater intelligence within on some level must have realized that well it did that night it realized that I was doing it unconsciously I can't live with myself and who is the self that I can't live with it's the unhappy superstructure that has been created so to some people it happens by itself so it you sometimes see people in poor countries people who certainly wouldn't have never attended a workshop who would never have bought a spiritual book and perhaps never come into contact with any spiritual teaching perhaps beyond the the traditional religion of their country which in most cases is just a formal thing and yet sometimes you see people and they they may even occasionally a beggar you see who has gone through no suffering anymore you can see a light shining through their eyes

the body may be unwell but they have gone into that inner acceptance of the isness of this moment and then something else has come through not everybody is ready whoever is ready for it it will happen for them they will whether it comes spontaneously or with the help of some so called spiritual teaching doesn't really matter if you are ready for it either it will happen to you spontaneously or will happen to you with the help of a spiritual teaching and you will suddenly hear it and suddenly see the possibility of what the Buddha called the end of suffering that's the whole teaching of the Buddha is has that purpose to bring about the end of suffering but neither at that time nor now is everybody ready to hear that so there are millions of people still on the planet who have never heard anything of the end of suffering or anything and if they heard it they still wouldn't hear it it still wouldn't it wouldn't sink in it's so sometimes people pick up a spiritual book whatever it may be Power of Now or any other spiritual book somebody has sent it to them says you must you really need this book sometimes people tell me they send it to they send it to a friend they send it to a relative an uncle their aging parent or the other way the aging parent sends it to their young daughter you must read this book you need it and so the recipient gets the book opens it says what does that mean it means nothing and then they well at best they put it on the shelf and it gathers dust or they may they even get angry they can even get they get angry some people whose ego is so strongly entrenched who don't want to let go of the suffering that's associated with ego they get angry when they see this in in the office Eckhart teachings one day apparently I don't I didn't see it but the a new earth arrived in a package in it somebody had put it through a shredder

[Speaker 6] (8:28:45 - 8:28:46)

and

[Speaker 1] (8:28:48 - 8:30:45)

and returned it to the office so this person was not ready you cannot force it on people and you cannot like if the apple isn't ripe then there isn't it just won't happen so there needs to be some degree of readiness and then either it happens spontaneously or it happens with the help of a teaching and then she it happens so all the spiritual teaching does it saves time which is not real but it's on this level you have to see levels beautifully expressed in the course in miracles where it says delay does not matter in eternity but it is tragic in time different levels so it just it saves time and suffering that's what spiritual teaching does because in the absence of a spiritual teaching you still have your suffering that's the teaching and the teacher everybody has that that's the main teaching and the main teacher even if you never come into contact with any spiritual teaching then your spiritual teacher is your suffering and that eventually it will wake you up eventually it could take time of course the awakening itself does not take time you can only wake up now one more quote from a course in miracles I haven't quoted that in a long time it has taken time to misguide you so completely but it takes no time at all to

be who you are